

**Garden City Standards for the 21st Century**

**Practical Guides for Creating Successful New Communities**

## **guide 1**

# locating and consenting new garden cities





**tcpa**

Practical Guides for Creating Successful New Communities

**Guide 1: Locating and Consenting New Garden Cities**

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**The Lady Margaret  
Patterson Osborn Trust**

**David Lock Associates**  
Town Planning and Urban Design



The TCPA would also like to thank the practitioners that attended an expert group roundtable to inform this Practical Guide. The Guide aims to reflect the range of opinions expressed at the roundtable, but not every detail contained within it reflects the opinions of all the attendees at the discussion. It should, however, reflect the spirit of constructive collaboration and considered debate. The TCPA would particularly like to thank David Lock for his detailed comments on drafts of this Guide.

Cover photograph of Letchworth Garden City courtesy of the Letchworth Garden City Heritage Foundation.

guide 1

**locating and consenting new garden cities**

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# The TCPA Practical Guides

Across the UK there is a shortage of housing, and it is increasingly understood that we need to plan and build new large-scale developments, in addition to renewing existing towns and villages. At the same time, many people worry that any new places built will be no more than soulless, unattractive dormitory suburbs. How can we prevent such outcomes? How can we ensure that new large-scale developments become socially and economically successful places – places that will improve over time, and in which people will want to live for generations to come? The answer lies in the Garden City development model – a proven way of funding, creating and maintaining successful high-quality places. A true Garden City is a place created following the Garden City principles, set out in the box below.



National planning policy guidance on a range of issues has been greatly reduced, so practical advice about how to create successful new places is more important than ever. The TCPA's Practical Guides – on location and consent; finance and delivery; design and masterplanning; planning for energy and climate change; homes for all; planning for arts and culture; planning for green and prosperous places; creating health-promoting environments; and long-term stewardship – are not detailed handbooks but instead set out the scope of opportunities for ambitious councils who want to create high-quality, large-scale new developments, whether or not they are able to follow all the Garden City principles. They highlight the key points for consideration and offer signposts to sources of further detailed information. They are 'living' documents that will be periodically updated to reflect key policy changes. Although they are focused on policy in England, the principles and key recommendations can be applied across the UK. The Practical Guides will help anyone attempting to create great places, for everyone, whether or not they describe what they are trying to achieve as a 'Garden City'.

## The Garden City principles

A Garden City is a holistically planned new settlement that enhances the natural environment and offers high-quality affordable housing and locally accessible work in beautiful, healthy and sociable communities. The Garden City principles are an indivisible and interlocking framework for delivery, and include:

- Land value capture for the benefit of the community.
- Strong vision, leadership and community engagement.
- Community ownership of land and long-term stewardship of assets.
- Mixed-tenure homes and housing types that are genuinely affordable.
- A wide range of local jobs in the Garden City within easy commuting distance of homes.
- Beautifully and imaginatively designed homes with gardens, combining the best of town and country to create healthy communities, and including opportunities to grow food.
- Development that enhances the natural environment, providing a comprehensive green infrastructure network and net biodiversity gains, and that uses zero-carbon and energy-positive technology to ensure climate resilience.
- Strong cultural, recreational and shopping facilities in walkable, vibrant, sociable neighbourhoods.
- Integrated and accessible transport systems, with walking, cycling and public transport designed to be the most attractive forms of local transport.

The TCPA has produced an extensive set of policy and practical resources on Garden Cities, which can be found at <http://www.tcpa.org.uk/pages/garden-cities.html>



# Summary

One of the fundamental questions that arise when considering new Garden Cities is: where should they be located? Answering this question involves addressing everything from strategic need to local politics. It also involves finding the right land, in the right place and at the right price so that the high ambitions embodied in the Garden City principles can be met.

In the 2016 Budget and the 2017 Housing White Paper the government made clear its support for new communities, and made a commitment to update the New Towns Act to provide the right vehicles to deliver development. But in a localised planning system and in the absence of any national strategic approach to locating new Garden Cities, it is up to local authorities, developers and communities to work together to plan for growth. This includes deciding on the most suitable location and the size needed to provide a sustainable community that creates jobs, meets local housing need, and finances and supports the hard and soft infrastructure needed to enable a community to thrive. It also requires a commitment to the long process of getting planning permission. The Housing White Paper also encourages joint working between authorities. There are a number of existing and emerging opportunities for local authorities to work alone or in partnership to plan for growth. Beyond the 'duty to co-operate' these opportunities include working together through joint planning units or development boards, or more formally through combined authorities.

## **Principles and organisational approaches for identifying need and locations**

Whatever scenario authorities are planning for growth within, the process must be underpinned by:

- **a strong evidence base**, compiled using a range of assessments and capacity studies and using tools such as sustainability appraisal, incorporating the requirements of strategic environmental assessment at an early stage of plan preparation;
- **an organisational approach** that includes strong local leadership, thinking beyond the Local Plan boundary, and taking a long-term view of growth requirements; and
- **a set of locational criteria** covering the scale and spatial options for growth, good connectivity, and the maximisation of opportunities to deliver sustainable development and bridge regional inequalities.

## **A sequential approach to identifying need and locations**

There is no 'one size fits all' approach to planning for growth. Assessment of growth needs and options may take place within Local Plan preparation, as a partial review of a Local Plan, or in some cases as a parallel and complementary process to Local Plan preparation. To help those involved in the process to ensure that such assessments are underpinned by the principles set out above and are undertaken in an open and democratic way, this Practical Guide sets out a broad framework of action – from determining the right working arrangements and undertaking the right needs and spatial options assessments, to providing the right brief and delivery vehicle.

## **Locally designated new Garden Cities**

In the absence of a national spatial plan for growth or a dedicated consent regime we are unlikely to get the scale, speed or type of development that the nation needs, in the places that need it most. Strong national policy and an updated New Towns Act to provide the right designation and consent processes and delivery mechanisms are required. Designation and consent processes must be led by local authorities and enabled by government. Section 3 of this Practical Guide explores how this might work in practice.

# 1

## Introduction

New Garden Cities can be successful only where there is access to the right land, in the right place, at the right price. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) recognises the role of larger-scale development in tackling growth needs, and the government has reinforced its support for councils planning for larger-scale development with the publication of a prospectus on *Locally-Led Garden Villages, Towns and Cities*<sup>1</sup> and the Housing White Paper.<sup>2</sup> However, despite the government's enthusiasm and commitment to update the New Towns Act to assist locally led delivery, there is currently no national spatial strategy for housing growth or for the identification of sites for larger-scale development.

In this context the onus is on local authorities to identify the need for, and locations of, new communities through their Local Plan processes. This relies on a robust process of gathering evidence, testing sites and setting out strong policy in Local Plans to support sites as they come forward. It also requires strong vision and local leadership to pursue what might not always be the easiest or most widely understood option for tackling growth needs.

### 1.1 Opportunities for ambitious councils

Despite these challenges, there remain huge opportunities for councils who are planning for growth at the local level. There is an increasing recognition that, by planning positively for growth, councils can discourage poor-quality 'bolt-on' housing developments – including those that are permitted through the appeal process where there is no Local Plan or the Local Plan is out of date. And processes such as devolution are creating opportunities for more strategic consideration of housing needs and approaches to growth. Combined authorities – effectively sub-regional groupings of authorities – are one of three current options for planning for new Garden Cities identified in this Practical Guide, alongside joint planning units and growth pursued by a single local authority. Furthermore, the release of public sector land, where is it in the right location, could provide an opportunity not only for housing sites but for innovation in new ways of sharing land values.

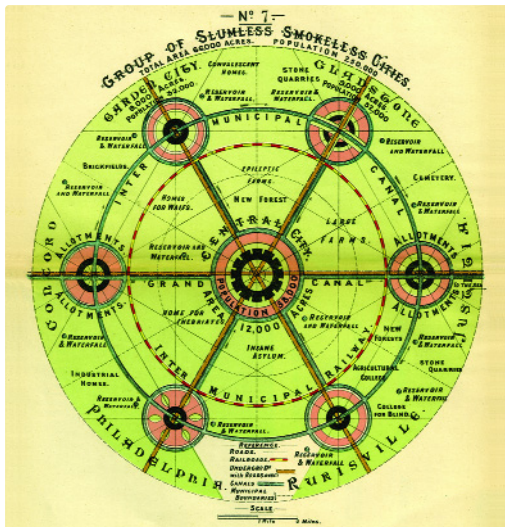
### 1.2 Why choose the 'new Garden City' option?

Well planned new communities provide an opportunity to create high-quality sustainable places, allowing for the highest sustainability standards, economies of scale, and better use of infrastructure. Key benefits of a new Garden City, as opposed to an urban extension, include the following:

- Green belt land can be protected and 'urban sprawl' can be avoided.
- The population of a new Garden City can provide the critical mass to support facilities needed for low-carbon lifestyles, such as rapid public transport, low-carbon energy systems, jobs located within walking distance of homes, and a range of cultural and leisure services, including a green infrastructure network providing quick access to the wider countryside.

1 *Locally-Led Garden Villages, Towns and Cities*. Department for Communities and Local Government, Mar. 2016. [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/508205/Locally-led\\_garden\\_villages\\_towns\\_and\\_cities.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/508205/Locally-led_garden_villages_towns_and_cities.pdf)

2 *Fixing Our Broken Housing Market*. Housing White Paper. Cm 9352. Department for Communities and Local Government, Feb. 2017, p.28. <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/housing-white-paper>



Howard's 'Social City' concept in diagrammatic form

**'It is important is to ensure that the whole portfolio of solutions has been considered'**

- Any negative impacts on the environment can be dealt with in a holistic way, with avoidance, mitigation and enhancement considered from the outset and integrated into the design of a new settlement.
- A new Garden City can be linked via sustainable public transport to another Garden City or existing town to provide a broad employment and services offer.
- Politically, it can be advantageous to engage communities on a single larger proposal rather than on several smaller ones.

One of the key benefits of new Garden Cities is that they can help to prevent the sprawl of existing towns and villages by providing strategic locations for sustainable new growth. When examining options for growth it is often considered cheaper (and politically easier) to link into the existing physical and social infrastructure of a place rather than create a new – but connected – community. However, no matter how rationally efficient and economical it might be to add another housing estate, suburb, business park or 'sustainable urban extension', a town must eventually reach its size limit. This limit might be a physical boundary or a feature in the landscape, or it may 'just be the sense – which could actually be measured for those that feel the need for science on this subject – that the latest town expansion is so removed from the heart of the place that it might as well not be part of the place at all'.<sup>3</sup>

In high-growth areas, and especially where green belts have been designated and add a policy stop to what may be a physical or psychological one, the choice has to be made between hugely expanding a small town or village nearby and starting a whole new town. A whole portfolio of solutions to meeting growth needs is necessary, and the right solution will depend on particular circumstances. What is important is to understand that the easiest route might not be the right one, and to ensure that the whole portfolio of solutions has been considered.

### **What about garden suburbs and sustainable urban extensions?**

The Garden City principles can be applied at a range of scales – and scale is important. Ebenezer Howard's Garden Cities were, in fact, proposed on the scale of towns. His network of smaller 'Garden Cities', linked by rapid public transport, was intended to provide all the benefits of a large city (Howard called this agglomeration the 'Social City').

3 *Best Practice in Urban Extensions and New Settlements*. TCPA, Mar. 2007, p.38.  
<https://www.tcpa.org.uk/best-practice-in-urban-extensions-and-new-settlements>



Sustainable urban extensions have been a popular approach to accommodating new development. The benefits of linking into existing infrastructure networks, such as those for transport, jobs and social infrastructure, include lower short-term costs. Furthermore, depending on the site, sustainable urban extensions are sometimes perceived to have fewer environmental impacts. However, unless they are properly planned, urban extensions can result in 'bolt-on estates', as ambitions fall away over time from the original vision. In practice, such bolt-on estates can encourage increased car use as they are usually little more than dormitories, often without an economic or community centre. However, well planned garden suburbs or urban villages could address these possible failings if they were to follow the principles set out on page 2 as part of a 'garden communities' palette of options.

'Garden towns', 'garden villages' and 'garden communities' are recent coinages, used to describe developments which aspire to the cachet of the Garden City brand. However, many currently fall short of implementing the full range of Garden City principles. There are huge opportunities for these projects to apply the principles of Garden Cities, and the TCPA's Practical Guides are designed to help all those who aspire to the Garden City ideal.

The 2016 *Locally-Led Garden Villages, Towns and Cities* prospectus<sup>4</sup> announced the government's support for 'garden villages', which it defines as new settlements of 1,500-10,000 homes which 'embed key garden city principles to develop communities that stand out from the ordinary' (page 6). The prospectus states that 'the garden village must be a new discrete settlement, and not an extension of an existing town or village' (page 7). At this scale, the need to ensure a range of essential services and local employment within the garden villages is essential to avoid the creation of a 'commuter settlement'. Further discussion of the garden villages programme is set out in Section 2.2.

4 *Locally-Led Garden Villages, Towns and Cities*. Department for Communities and Local Government. Mar. 2016. [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/508205/Locally-led\\_garden\\_villages\\_towns\\_and\\_cities.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/508205/Locally-led_garden_villages_towns_and_cities.pdf)



## 1.3 Thinking 'larger than local' – towards a more strategic approach

While there are several authorities aiming to support growth through the Local Plan (including many working with the TCPA through the New Communities Group), some of whom are receiving support through the government's 'Locally-Led Garden Villages, Towns and Cities' programme, there are simply not enough sites coming forward of the right scale, in the right places, or which compare well with the Garden City ideal. There is a real benefit in thinking strategically, and the lack of a national strategic approach should not prevent ambitious local authorities from working with adjacent authorities to plan strategically for growth.

The TCPA has outlined in recent publications<sup>5</sup> how, learning from the post-war New Towns programme, the process of finding locations for new Garden Cities should be led by local authorities (or by groups of local authorities working together), enabled by government and underpinned by a strong evidence base within a national or sub-national policy framework. Amendments to the New Towns Act could allow for this locally-led approach, outlining how designation begins with larger-than-local planning which identifies the need and establishes the locations for development. The TCPA will continue to campaign for this strategic approach, but it is also necessary to understand what can be done right now in the current political and policy landscape.

## 1.4 The purpose of this Practical Guide

This Practical Guide – which is closely linked to *Guide 2: Finance and Delivery*, and should be read alongside it – is designed to inform local authorities who are planning positively for growth. It lays out a set of principles that should guide the process of locating and consenting new Garden Cities. Given that it may be some time before there is a strategic approach to planning for new communities from government, it also explores how these principles might be applied in three scenarios for planning for growth that are currently open to local authorities and their delivery partners:

- a single authority planning for growth through a Local Plan;
- a group of local authorities working together to address housing needs; and
- a combined authority with devolved powers.

The Practical Guide then considers what might be an alternative to the current approach, exploring what a national policy for the designation of new Garden Cities might look like.

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5 The TCPA recently produced research looking at options for identifying locations for new communities which explains how this was undertaken for the Garden Cities and the post-war New Towns and explores the options for a properly planned programme today. See *New Towns and Garden Cities – Lessons for Tomorrow. Stage 2: Lessons for Delivering a New Generation of Garden Cities*. TCPA, Sept. 2015. <https://www.tcpa.org.uk/research-gcnt>

# 2 The policy context

## **'A new generation of new communities'**

*'We need to make the most of the potential for new settlements alongside developing existing areas. Well-planned, well-designed, new communities have an important part to play in meeting our long-term housing needs. Provided they are supported by the necessary infrastructure, they are often more popular with local communities than piecemeal expansion of existing settlements.'*

*Fixing Our Broken Housing Market.* Housing White Paper. Cm 9352. Department for Communities and Local Government, Feb. 2017, p.28

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/housing-white-paper>

The policy context for planning at scale is fragmented, but the government has shown its commitment to this agenda, and there are significant opportunities for ambitious councils planning for growth, as outlined below.

## 2.1 The government's approach to considering growth needs

### **National infrastructure and sub-national consideration of growth needs**

While there is no national strategic spatial plan for housing growth in England, there are initiatives to plan for the infrastructure to support growth. The National Infrastructure Plan, first produced by the coalition government in 2010, and revised and updated in 2014 and 2016, does not cover housing but commits to a number of infrastructure projects designed to facilitate the delivery of existing large-scale development projects at places such as Ebbsfleet, Northstowe, Bicester Garden Town, and Old Oak Common.<sup>6</sup>

In October 2015 the National Infrastructure Commission (NIC) was established by HM Treasury to look at the UK's future needs for nationally significant infrastructure and provide greater certainty for investors by taking a long-term approach to the major investment decisions facing the country.

The NIC's remit does not currently include housing, but in March 2016 it began work on a review of proposals and options for 'unlocking growth, housing and jobs in the Cambridge-Milton Keynes-Oxford corridor',<sup>7</sup> which includes consideration of housing growth needs in that area. An interim report was published in November 2016.<sup>8</sup> This signifies a clear move towards a more strategic consideration of growth needs at the sub-national, 'larger-than-local' level. The final report is due in November 2017

6 See the HM Treasury/Infrastructure and Projects Authority 'National Infrastructure Plan' webpage at <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/national-infrastructure-plan> and, in particular, *National Infrastructure Delivery Plan 2016-2021*. Infrastructure and Projects Authority, Mar. 2016. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-infrastructure-delivery-plan-2016-to-2021>

7 Letter to Lord Adonis, Chair of the National Infrastructure Commission, from George Osborne, Chancellor of the Exchequer. Annex: Terms of reference. 16 Mar. 2016. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-infrastructure-commission-chancellors-letter-to-lord-adonis-and-terms-of-reference>

8 *Cambridge-Milton Keynes-Oxford Corridor: Interim Report*. National Infrastructure Commission, Nov. 2016. <https://www.nic.org.uk/our-work/growth-corridor/>

## Considering growth needs in Local Plans

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) requires local authorities to consider whether larger-scale developments are the best way of meeting their growth needs:

*'The supply of new homes can sometimes be best achieved through planning for larger scale development, such as new settlements or extensions to existing villages and towns that follow the principles of Garden Cities. Working with the support of their communities, local planning authorities should consider whether such opportunities provide the best way of achieving sustainable development. In doing so, they should consider whether it is appropriate to establish Green Belt around or adjoining any such new development.'*<sup>9</sup>

There is no supporting process or guidance on how to plan for larger-scale development set out in the NPPF. Instead, it sets out a series of requirements for local authorities to consider when allocating land for development – from using locations that reduce greenhouse gas emissions and encourage public transport use, to avoiding areas of flood risk and high environmental value.

The Housing White Paper, *Fixing our Broken Housing Market*, commits the government to updating the NPPF to strengthen its policy to support the delivery of existing and any future 'garden communities':

*'following the previous consultation on changes to the National Planning Policy Framework,<sup>[10]</sup> amend policy to encourage a more proactive approach by authorities to bringing forward new settlements in their plans, as one means by which housing requirements can be addressed.'*<sup>11</sup>

In September 2017 the government launched a consultation on housing delivery, setting out a number of proposals to reform the planning system to increase the supply of new homes and increase local authority capacity to manage growth.<sup>12</sup>

## Encouraging joint working – a step towards strategic planning

The Housing White Paper indicates that the government recognises the need for a 'larger-than-local' approach to plan-making. It states that 'the Government would like to see more and better joint working where planning issues go beyond individual authorities, building on the existing duty to co-operate'.<sup>13</sup> The Housing White Paper removes the policy expectation that each local planning authority should produce a single Local Plan, stating that 'authorities should identify the most effective way of setting out their key strategic priorities (which may be jointly with other authorities), with the expectation that more detailed matters are addressed through neighbourhood plans or more focused development plan documents'.<sup>14</sup> The proposals allow spatial development strategies to allocate strategic sites.

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9 *National Planning Policy Framework*. Department for Communities and Local Government, Mar. 2012, para. 52. [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/6077/2116950.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/6077/2116950.pdf)

10 *Consultation on Proposed Changes to National Planning Policy*. Department for Communities and Local Government, Dec. 2015, p.11. [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/488276/151207\\_Consultation\\_document.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/488276/151207_Consultation_document.pdf)

11 *Fixing Our Broken Housing Market*. Housing White Paper. Cm 9352. Department for Communities and Local Government, Feb. 2017, p.84. <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/housing-white-paper>

12 *Planning for the Right Homes in the Right Places: Consultation Proposals*. Department for Communities and Local Government, Sept. 2017. <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/planning-for-the-right-homes-in-the-right-places-consultation-proposals>

13 *Fixing Our Broken Housing Market*. Housing White Paper. Cm 9352. Department for Communities and Local Government, Feb. 2017, p.72. <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/housing-white-paper>

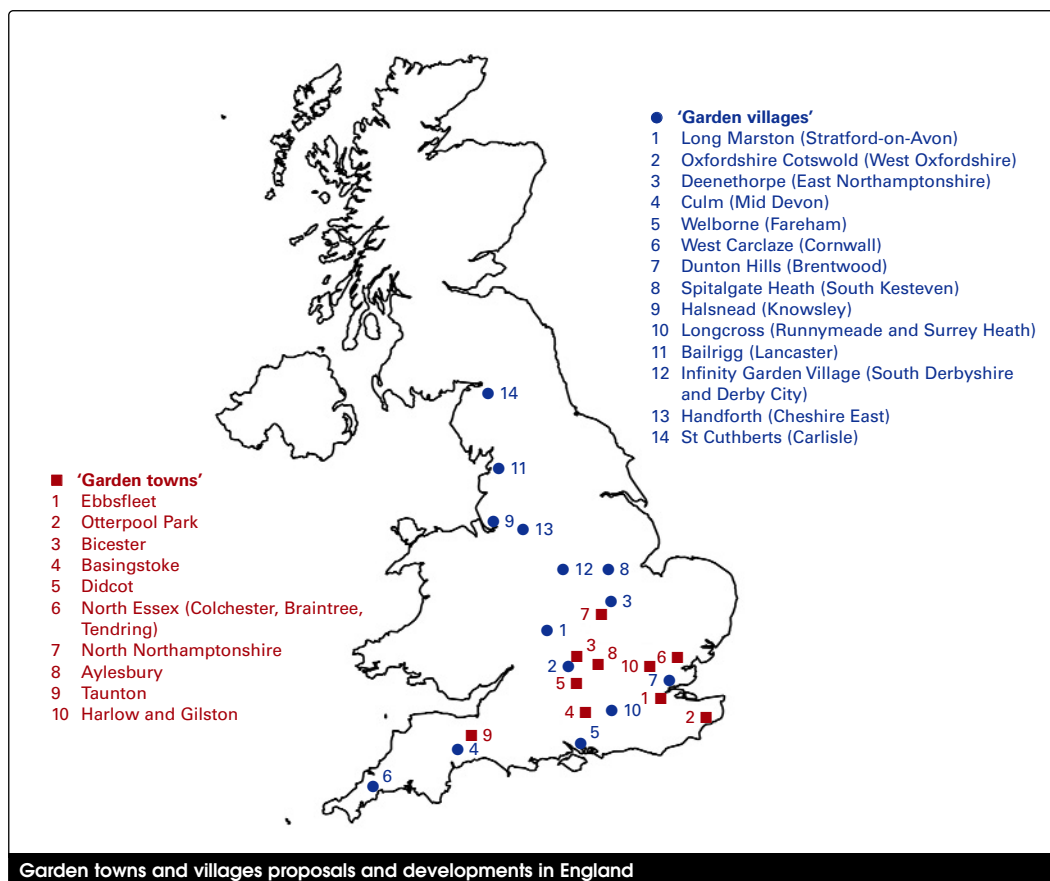
14 *Fixing Our Broken Housing Market*. Housing White Paper. Cm 9352. Department for Communities and Local Government, Feb. 2017, p.73. <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/housing-white-paper>

While the implications of the removal of a requirement to create a Local Plan are still being explored, the encouragement of ‘larger-than-local’ planning allows authorities to think strategically about growth needs and provides a new opportunity to apply the principles outlined in this Practical Guide.

## 2.2 The Locally-Led Garden Villages, Towns and Cities prospectus

In line with the 2016 Budget announcement of support for ‘the construction of a new wave of garden towns and cities across the country, with the potential to deliver over 100,000 homes’,<sup>15</sup> the government published the *Locally-Led Garden Villages, Towns and Cities prospectus*<sup>16</sup> in March 2016. The prospectus replaced the *Locally-led Garden Cities prospectus* issued in April 2014,<sup>17</sup> which had led to the provision of capacity funding and planning support for projects at:

- Ebbsfleet Garden City (Dartford Borough, Gravesham Borough and Kent County Councils);
- Bicester Garden Town (Cherwell District Council);



15 *Budget 2016*. HC 901. HM Treasury, Mar. 2016. Para 1.123. [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/508193/HMT\\_Budget\\_2016\\_Web\\_Accessible.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/508193/HMT_Budget_2016_Web_Accessible.pdf)

16 *Locally-Led Garden Villages, Towns and Cities*. Department for Communities and Local Government, Mar. 2016. [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/508205/Locally-led\\_garden\\_villages\\_towns\\_and\\_cities.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/508205/Locally-led_garden_villages_towns_and_cities.pdf)

17 *Locally-led Garden Cities*. Department for Communities and Local Government, Apr. 2014. Withdrawn Sept. 2016. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/locally-led-garden-cities-prospectus>



- North Northamptonshire Garden Communities (Wellingborough, Kettering and Corby Borough Councils, East Northamptonshire Council and Northamptonshire County Council);
- Manydown (Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council and Hampshire County Council);
- Didcot Garden Town (South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse District Councils); and
- North Essex Garden Communities (Braintree District, Colchester Borough, Tendring District and Essex County Councils).

The new prospectus includes an offer of support for ‘garden villages’ of 1,500-10,000 homes, as well as continued support for larger-scale communities of more than 15,000 homes set out in the previous prospectus. In January 2017 the government announced support for 14 new ‘garden villages’ and four additional ‘garden towns’ (at Aylesbury, Buckinghamshire; Taunton, Somerset; Harlow and Gilston, Essex/Hertfordshire; and Otterpool Park, Kent).<sup>18</sup> The prospectus invites local authorities to bid for support (brokerage, planning support, capacity funding, and some capital funding) where they can demonstrate scale, deliverability, local leadership and support, and preferably development on brownfield land. It offers ‘planning freedoms’ where housing delivery can be guaranteed and there is additional or accelerated delivery. The details of this offer are to be explored in the context of individual proposals.

The inclusion of support for smaller ‘garden villages’ raises an important issue of scale – particularly the need to ensure that, like the original ‘garden villages’ of New Earswick and Bournville, smaller communities have the right facilities and jobs provision and genuinely affordable homes, and so will not be merely ‘bolt-on’ housing estates using the ‘garden’ tag. The ‘garden villages’ route may also provide an ‘easier’ option for authorities, running the risk of reducing support for more ambitious proposals. However, the new prospectus is clear that the government is not seeking to support places which merely use ‘garden’ as a label, and instead wants to ‘support local areas that embed key garden city principles to develop communities that stand out from the ordinary’.<sup>19</sup>

The prospectus falls short of requiring that expressions of interest commit to all the Garden City principles – which are indivisible and interlocking – and does not allow for a strategic approach to identifying locations informed by the geography of housing markets and needs, infrastructure provision, or the wider desire to rebalance the nation’s economy. Without national standards or policy requirements in place, it will be up to those delivering these developments to commit to these principles in practice and ensure that they meet the commitment to quality, affordability and sustainability that the ‘garden’ label implies.

The government may consider supporting an additional round of ‘garden villages’ in 2017/18. Support for developments of 10,000 homes or more continues on a ‘rolling’ basis, and authorities are encouraged to explore the opportunity with the Department for Communities and Local Government.

Following the government’s March 2016 commitment to update the New Towns Act 1981,<sup>20</sup> the government has now legislated in the Neighbourhood Planning Act 2017 to enable the creation of locally accountable development corporations. Further measures are due to be introduced through secondary legislation, with aim of producing a working system by the

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18 ‘First ever garden villages named with government support’. Press Release. Department for Communities and Local Government, 2 Jan. 2017. <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/first-ever-garden-villages-named-with-government-support>

19 *Locally-Led Garden Villages, Towns and Cities*. Department for Communities and Local Government, Mar. 2016, p.6. [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/508205/Locally-led\\_garden\\_villages\\_towns\\_and\\_cities.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/508205/Locally-led_garden_villages_towns_and_cities.pdf)

20 *Locally-Led Garden Villages, Towns and Cities*. Department for Communities and Local Government, Mar. 2016, para. 43, pp.10-11. [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/508205/Locally-led\\_garden\\_villages\\_towns\\_and\\_cities.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/508205/Locally-led_garden_villages_towns_and_cities.pdf)

end of 2017.<sup>21</sup> While the new town development corporation approach will not be suitable in every case (and particularly not for smaller developments), modernised legislation could unlock a new generation of highly sustainable places.

### **Strategic thinking through devolution – complex picture; a range of opportunities**

The Cities and Local Government Devolution Act 2016 is a crucial element of the government's policy of devolving powers and responsibilities to local areas in England. Combined authorities are a new form of strategic sub-regional authority. While there is no single policy document setting out their role at the time of writing, such bodies are being created across England. They may provide an opportunity for 'larger-than-local' consideration of housing needs. Several devolution bids have already noted the opportunities of large-scale development, making reference to using New-Town-type powers. Measures in the Housing and Planning Act and the Cities and Local Government Devolution Act give such bodies powers similar to the Mayor of London's. In some cases this will mean statutory planning powers in strategy preparation and the designation of combined authority development corporations modelled on London's mayoral development corporations. Such bodies may well become the preferred route for designating new communities. City-regions such as Manchester have already demonstrated how devolved powers can lead to the sub-regional consideration of growth needs. However, as each area will operate under a specific, bespoke negotiated deal there are a number of uncertainties in relation to the accountability systems for combined authority mayors (for example, not all will operate with an equivalent to the London Assembly) and the extent to which plans will be spatial and/or statutory. A range of joint working arrangements are possible within the policy and legislative framework outlined above – from formal co-operation through combined authorities to single authorities planning for growth through the Local Plan and working informally with adjacent authorities through the 'duty to co-operate'. While the powers to deliver at scale under these arrangements differ, in each case there is an opportunity to think strategically about growth needs.

## **2.3 The government's approach to assessing and consenting sites**

National Planning Practice Guidance provides further detail on the policies in the NPPF, including signposts to relevant guidance to support the requirements to consider issues such as flood risk and public transport when considering housing allocations. Planning Practice Guidance includes guidance on housing and economic land availability assessments that consider the availability of land for housing and other uses. The methodology of such assessments considers the potential impact of different sites on a range of factors, such as flood risk and the impact on landscape and heritage features. The guidance for these assessments looks at constraints rather than encouraging authorities to proactively look for the best possible site that could actually enhance natural and built environment assets. However, the methodology could nevertheless be strengthened or adapted to identify sites for new Garden Cities.

There is currently no dedicated consent regime for new communities: large-scale projects must be consented through the usual development management processes. Although the New Towns Act 1981 has been amended to provide the opportunity for councils to be the accountable body for development corporations, the details of how this relates to the designation process are due to be outlined in secondary legislation. In the absence of a dedicated content regime, strong Local Plan policy is required to raise the bar for developers, and to help decision-makers permit only exemplary schemes.

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21 Local accountability is only one element of the modernisation required. In the absence any requirements for place-making principles and requirements for long-term stewardship in law, it is up to councils and delivery bodies to embed such objectives in new locally accountable development corporations

# 3 Key locational criteria



It is clear that now is the time for councils to be innovative and ambitious in meeting local housing needs and aspirations, seizing the opportunities to create world-class new communities. Identifying the need for and locations of new Garden Cities requires consideration of a complex web of factors at a range of geographical and temporal scales. There are a number of emerging routes for local authorities who want to plan for growth, including the new combined authorities. As there is no 'one size fits all' solution, the chosen approach will reflect each authority's specific circumstances. Regardless of the approach taken, the following principles should be used to underpin the process.

## 3.1 A strong evidence base

The process of identifying locations for new Garden Cities should be underpinned by a strong evidence base – which is vital in deciding whether a new Garden City or 'garden community' is the right solution. This requires a range of assessments, including evaluations of housing requirements, urban capacity (for example through strategic housing land availability assessments), employment, the economy, flood risk, transport, biodiversity, landscape, and energy production needs and capacity at a range of scales. Authorities should consider commissioning new studies where the evidence does not already exist. Sustainability appraisal, incorporating strategic environmental assessment (SA/SEA), is one of the key tools for informing the plan-making process at an early stage – and for informing the Local Plan's approach to future growth. Using the evidence base described above, these tools can be used to determine the broad spatial locations for future growth and whether a large-scale new community or Garden City is the most sustainable option.

## 3.2 Organisational approach

Whatever the shape of the organisation undertaking a site selection task, there are a number of principles that should underpin its approach. These relate to advocacy, collaborative working, taking a long-term perspective, and committing to strong, evidence-based policy-making.

### Strong local leadership

The initiation and long-term success of any large-scale development project requires the enthusiasm and commitment of local leaders. The process of planning for growth requires procedural legitimacy and a long-term commitment from local leaders to engage local people from the outset, building trust in what can be a challenging process. This commitment must be demonstrated throughout the process. Once a project is permitted, the delivery period of the new community will extend far beyond several electoral cycles – and will, in fact, benefit future generations not currently represented in the political process.

#### Recommendation

**The local authority should clearly set out in the Local Plan or a supporting document the proposed process for assessing the need for and locations of new Garden Cities, including how local people will be involved.**

#### Recommendation

**Local councillors should play a proactive role in explaining the process and communicating to local residents and investors both the long-term vision and the multiple benefits of investing in large-scale development.**

### Thinking beyond the Local Plan boundary

Unless an authority is large in its territory or unitary in its powers, considerations relating to the need for a Garden City and potential locations for growth are likely to cross administrative boundaries. Even where this is not the case, local authorities will need to work together to consider impacts on local infrastructure and services. Without formal regional structures it will be down to local authorities to plan together, and there are a number of emerging routes to achieve this. Co-operation between councils (as required by the 'duty to co-operate') should be undertaken from an early stage, not only to identify a strategy for growth and to share resources, but also to co-ordinate engagement with existing communities. Strategic planning, carried out through, for example, joint planning committees, can reduce costs, promote efficiency and reduce conflict, while protecting the environment and promoting development in the right places. Where combined authorities have been created there is a real opportunity to consider needs beyond the Local Plan boundary.

#### Recommendation

**Local authorities should consider 'duty to co-operate' requirements at an early stage.**



**Recommendation**

Local authorities should consider whether housing market areas, or a similar economic geography, might provide the basis and geographical extent of a 'larger-than-local' planning partnership and an opportunity to work more closely with adjacent authorities.

**Recommendation**

Where a local authority is working alone, it should consider the needs of adjacent communities when planning engagement activities for new Garden Cities.

**Taking a long-term view of growth requirements**

The challenge for local authorities is to determine the best long-term solution. To ensure that the right amount of growth is planned in the first place, authorities should be thinking in 20- or 30-year timescales, at a minimum, rather than in terms of the five-year housing supply requirements set out in the current planning system. This includes considering the right pattern and scale of development and ensuring that enough land is available from the outset. Although development will be brought forward in phases over a long period of time, a long-term approach can help to ensure better planning of other development, such as transport infrastructure and other services.

**Recommendation**

Local authorities should consider housing needs beyond the Local Plan period (looking forward over a period of, say, 20-30 years) and should be ambitious in terms of the scale of a new Garden City, even if it will be brought forward in several phases over many years.

**3.3 Locational criteria****Understanding spatial options for growth**

The Garden City principles are applicable to different models of large-scale development, including towns, suburbs/urban extensions, and villages – and the right solution will vary from place to place. The principles can also be applied to smaller, inner urban regeneration sites, although opportunities to maximise the benefits of Garden City governance models and land value capture may be fewer for smaller sites.

While the principles are applicable to different models of large-scale development, there are important distinctions between, on the one hand, new large-scale communities surrounded by countryside with sustainable links to other settlements, and, on the other, suburbs or urban extensions built as part of the urban area of an existing town or city.

In making these choices, the challenge for local authorities is to determine the best long-term solution. As noted above, this means thinking in, at a minimum, 20- or 30-year timescales rather than in terms of the five-year housing supply requirements set out in the current planning system. Over the long term, substantial growth in housing need is forecast – if a long-term approach is taken, would endless 'bolt-on' housing estates be the best solution,

or would a new community better resolve the issues raised by housing growth and meet the aspirations of the community as a whole?

### Recommendation

**Authorities should consider the full range of growth solutions, using a sound evidence base to ensure that the right long-term approach is taken and avoiding any temptation to 'bolt on' housing estates to existing towns and villages where a more sustainable long-term option is available.**

## Good connectivity

Today it is not only undesirable but also impossible to create a place which is entirely 'self-contained' – new Garden Cities will always become part of the existing network of development across the country. The post-war New Towns were tasked with the goal of self-containment, and it was never possible to achieve this aim. A location that is well connected physically and economically is essential. The Garden City pioneers recognised the importance of connection, with the concept of the 'Social City' demonstrating the benefits of a cluster of smaller settlements which, linked by rapid public transport, would together provide all the benefits of a much larger place. In 2007 the TCPA set out how existing transport corridors could be used to identify locations for linked new settlements.<sup>22</sup> Peter Hall and Colin Ward explored this in detail in their book *Sociable Cities*,<sup>23</sup> setting out proposals for new development in the Midlands, the East of England and the South East, and explaining how developing in strategic locations along existing road and rail routes could not only provide a sustainable pattern of growth and but also protect rural areas away from these routes. The right spatial approach may be different in each area, but different patterns of growth should always be considered first in relation to connectivity.

### Recommendation

**Processes of identifying locations for new Garden Cities should consider how places are connected physically (i.e. by rail and road), economically (i.e. through economic and travel-to-work patterns) and socially (i.e. through the provision of services between settlements) as a key indication of likely success and to maximise opportunities to facilitate low-carbon lifestyles.**

## Maximising opportunities for sustainable development

Locations for new Garden Cities should not only avoid damage to areas that are protected for their ecological, landscape, historical and climate resilience value, but should be located in areas where they can make a positive impact in such respects. Underpinning the consideration of a site for a new Garden City should be the extent to which it will allow:

- resource use within environmental limits;
- the achievement of social justice; and
- positive impacts on biodiversity and assets of ecological, landscape, historical and climate resilience value.

22 *Best Practice in Urban Extensions and New Settlements*. TCPA, Mar. 2007, p.38.

<https://www.tcpa.org.uk/best-practice-in-urban-extensions-and-new-settlements>

23 P Hall and C Ward: *Sociable Cities: The 21st-Century Reinvention of the Garden City*. Routledge, 2014

**Recommendation**

**Resource use within environmental limits, the achievement of social justice, and positive impacts on biodiversity and assets of ecological, landscape, historical and climate resilience value should be used as key assessment criteria in SEA/SA and other site assessment processes.**

**Recommendation**

**Where sites are put forward by the private sector, authorities should require the proponent to demonstrate how the sites meet these criteria.**

**Bridging regional economic inequalities**

In recent years the locational focus of large-scale development has primarily been the South East of England. While this is a response to identified need, there has been little if any consideration of the impacts on the economic geography of the country as a whole and on the need to rebalance the country. Processes for identifying locations for new Garden Cities should consider this wider geography.

**Recommendation**

**Local authorities should consider the impact of different growth options on the regional economy.**

**Recommendation**

**The government should consider, at a national level, the spatial implications of new communities on the economy, and should support local authorities in their consideration of strategic growth options.**

# 4 Current opportunities

In the absence of a national strategic approach to locating new Garden Cities, it is up to local authorities, developers and communities to work together to decide on the most suitable location and the size needed to provide a sustainable community that creates jobs, meets local housing need, and finances and supports the hard and soft infrastructure needed for a community to thrive. There are a number of existing and emerging opportunities for local authorities to work alone or in partnership to plan for growth. This Section explores how the process of identifying both the need for and locations of new Garden Cities might work under three scenarios:

- a single local authority aiming to facilitate growth through its Local Plan processes;
- a group of local authorities that share a housing market area or other economic geography; and
- a combined authority seeking support through the devolution agenda.

At present, for all of these scenarios the process of getting planning permission for development must take place through the development management system.

## 4.1 Planning for growth – three scenarios

### Scenario 1: A single local authority planning for growth

In a localised planning system, the majority of authorities planning for growth are doing so through their Local Plan. The Local Plan provides a major opportunity to think about the long-term future and examine whether a Garden City or garden suburb would provide an appropriate way forward. Unless an authority is extensive in its powers or geography, consideration of growth needs will involve adjacent authorities, and local authorities are required by law through the 'duty to co-operate' to 'engage constructively, actively and on an ongoing basis' on planning matters that impact on more than one local planning area. In reality, engagement does not always lead to a balanced consideration of growth needs, but single authorities can seek to establish good working relationships with adjacent authorities or discuss joint planning as set out in scenario 2 below. In the absence of a formal joint working relationship, authorities can still think beyond the Local Plan boundary and timescales. Some authorities, such as Milton Keynes (see Case Study 1), have undertaken initiatives to complement Local Plan processes and help them plan strategically for future growth within their boundary.

### Scenario 2: A group of local authorities working together to address housing needs

Where several local planning authorities share a housing market area there is an opportunity to plan together, and to plan beyond the required five-year land supply. Several councils are already seeing the benefits of planning together to meet their housing and growth needs. In North Northamptonshire (see Case Study 2), a group of authorities have created the North Northamptonshire Joint Planning Unit to enable strategic consideration of growth needs, and in South Hampshire, PUSH (the Partnership for Urban South Hampshire), formed by a partnership of local councils working with local enterprise partnerships and the Homes and Communities Agency, is working on a strategic approach to planning for growth. Harlow Council and adjacent boroughs have established a 'Co-operation for Sustainable Development Board' to support plan-making and the delivery of sustainable



## Case Study 1 Imagining the future in Milton Keynes

Amazing MK



Milton Keynes is one of the fastest growing cities in the country. Since its designation as a New Town in 1967, Milton Keynes has been considered a place that is enthusiastic about growth. Having already reached its planned population of 250,000, the city is set to double in size through a series of planned urban extensions. The unitary Milton Keynes Council is currently working on a new Local Plan – ‘Plan:MK’ – that will replace the 2013 core strategy. Alongside the Local Plan processes the council has set up an ‘MK Futures 2050 Commission’<sup>i</sup> to engage and explore what it means to make a great city greater, considering factors that could affect Milton Keynes over the coming decades and related possible future scenarios, including various spatial options for growth – from further expansion to a cluster of smaller Garden Cities around the original New Town. The findings of the commission will inform the strategic development options in the Local Plan. A process that looks at long-term growth options alongside Local Plan processes allows the council to think beyond the Local Plan’s timescales, and an independent commission adds an additional layer of rigour to the consideration of development options. However, it can be costly to set up such a body, and there must be clarity on how any such commission will work with local people to ensure the legitimacy of the process.

i See the Mk Futures 2050 Commission website, at <http://www.mkfutures2050.com/>

communities across geographical and administrative boundaries in West Essex, East Hertfordshire and the adjoining London boroughs.<sup>24</sup> And three councils in North Essex are working together to plan for future growth. In all these cases, joint working has involved consideration of the need for, and potential locations of, large-scale development.

24 *Terms of Reference: Co-operation for Sustainable Development Board*. Harlow Council et al., Oct. 2014. <http://www.harlow.gov.uk/sites/harlow/files/documents/files/Terms%20of%20Reference.pdf>

## Case Study 2 North Northamptonshire Joint Planning Unit



The North Northamptonshire Joint Planning Unit (JPU) was formally established in October 2004 by Corby, Kettering, Wellingborough and East Northamptonshire Councils, together with Northamptonshire County Council. The JPU is funded through contributions from the local planning authorities, and co-ordinates the preparation of the North Northamptonshire Local Plan.

The Joint Planning Committee was established in July 2005 as the formal decision-making body for the JPU, and was the first such committee established under new planning legislation. It is made up of three elected members from each council and is responsible for agreeing the joint core spatial strategy and other joint planning policy work, but has no development control powers, which remain with the individual district/borough councils.

The joint core spatial strategy ('the plan') was adopted in June 2008 and provides a framework for long-term change and development in North Northamptonshire, covering housing, jobs, shopping and the environment and related issues. It also sets out policies to guide how change will be managed, such as where development should be located, guidelines on design, controls over the impacts of development sites on their surroundings, and the identification of infrastructure that needs to be provided. The plan is currently in the process of being reviewed. Based on the framework provided by the plan, the individual councils have provided/are working to prepare more detailed plans for parts of their areas, including site-specific proposals, policies to control the form of development, and area action plans for the town centres.<sup>i</sup>

The JPU is working on a joint core strategy which includes housing requirements and strategic opportunities, and development principles for strategic sites.<sup>ii</sup>

i See the North Northamptonshire Joint Planning Unit website, at <http://www.nnjpu.org.uk/aboutus/default.asp>

ii *North Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy 2011-2031. June 2015 Focused Changes to the Pre-Submission Plan.* North Northamptonshire Joint Planning Unit, Jun. 2015. <http://www.nnjpu.org.uk/docs/Pres%20Submission%20JCS%20as%20amended%20by%20Focused%20Changes%20June%202015.pdf>

### **Scenario 3: A combined authority with devolved powers**

A number of the devolution bids point to the need for a strategic plan and powers to establish development corporations to deliver new communities. Combined authorities each have their own settlement, with different planning powers related to a specific local development order. Although powers and opportunities will vary from place to place, and may not include plan-making powers, the formation of a joint working authority provides an opportunity to plan strategically for growth. Some combined authorities, such as the Greater Manchester Combined Authority, are already planning in this way (see Case Study 3).

## **4.2 Stages in identifying need and locations**

Local Plan processes provide a framework for identifying the need for and locations of new Garden Cities, but, as previously noted, there is no single 'one size fits all' approach.

Whichever scenario best represents the working arrangements for any particular local authority, there is a basic sequence of activities to be undertaken in identifying the need for and locations of new large-scale development. A comparison of these stages across the three scenarios is set out below.

### **Stage 0: Determining working arrangements**

The right working arrangements must be secured if the requirements for advocacy, collaborative working, long-term perspective and commitment to strong evidence-based policy-making set out in Section 3 are to be met. For a single authority, this means putting in place arrangements to meet the 'duty to co-operate'; for a group of authorities it means considering the establishment of a joint planning unit. It also involves deciding whether the process will be part of existing Local Plan preparation or carried out as a partial review of a recently adopted plan. For combined authorities it means establishing an approach to joint working which may include setting up a joint planning unit and securing agreement for a strategic plan.

### **Stage 1: Objective needs assessment**

Using tools such as strategic housing market assessment and sustainability appraisal/strategic environmental assessment, the authority/ies should make an assessment of the housing market area for the strategic plan period, plus scenarios for 10-20+ years beyond the plan timescale for 'future proofing' purposes. A combined authority can either aggregate existing Local Plan data or commission sub-regional evidence – perhaps via a joint planning committee. In each case, scenario planning should be undertaken with the public to assist with early understanding of growth pressures.

### **Stage 2: Spatial growth options assessment/site search, incorporating Garden City principles**

Once the scale of need has been identified, capacity studies and examinations of growth options (including the role of new settlements) should be undertaken. Locational criteria set out in Section 3 of this guide and the Garden City principles should be used in considering growth and site options. The approach may include creating an outline design brief for a new community/ies and including Garden City principles in the strategic environmental assessment/sustainability appraisal and strategic housing land availability assessment frameworks. For single authorities, the 'duty to co-operate' requires adjacent authorities to be involved. Joint working authorities are more likely to have a robust evidence base, covering cross-boundary

### **Case Study Box 3**

#### **Greater Manchester Combined Authority**

The Greater Manchester Combined Authority (GMCA) was created in 2011 and is made up of the ten Greater Manchester councils and the Mayor of Greater Manchester. The GMCA has formal powers and responsibilities set out in law. It has its own budget and employs staff to run the organisation and work full time on its objectives.

In July 2014 the GMCA received £476.7 million in government funding under the Local Growth Fund. A variety of boards, panels and committees work specifically on matters such as transport, health and social care, planning, and housing.

Since 2014 the GMCA has been developing the Greater Manchester Spatial Framework (GMSF), an overarching development plan intended to ensure that the right land is available in the right places to deliver the homes and jobs needed up to 2035; and to ensure that the new infrastructure required to achieve this is identified (such as road, rail, Metrolink, and utility networks). The GMSF will be a development plan within which Greater Manchester's ten local planning authorities can each identify more detailed sites for jobs and homes in their own area. As such, the GMSF will not cover everything that a Local Plan would cover, and individual districts will continue to produce their own Local Plans.<sup>i</sup>

Importantly, the GMSF aims to address the environmental capacity of Greater Manchester, setting out how to enhance and protect the quality of the natural environment, conserve wildlife and tackle low-carbon and flood risk issues, and so accommodate growth sustainably. Alongside the GMSF, the GMCA is developing an integrated appraisal framework (including strategic environmental assessment, sustainability appraisal, health impact assessment, and equality impact assessment) to ensure that the impacts of decisions are understood.

Key milestones include:

- consultation on an initial GMSF evidence base – November 2014 (consultation closed);
- consultation on vision and draft strategic options – November 2015 to January 2016 (responses to consultation now published);
- call for sites (initial responses now published);
- draft GMSF – published for consultation in autumn 2016 (consultation closed);
- publication of responses to the draft GMSF in autumn 2017; and
- publication of second draft GMSF and further consultation in summer 2018.

The GMCA is in a particularly strong position, with the powers and resources to make devolution a success. Other combined authorities may face a more challenging situation, but the GMSF provides a useful example of how to work together to plan for growth. There is an opportunity to use the process positively to test a portfolio of solutions to growth needs through the plan. A comprehensive appraisal framework will help with this process.

The draft vision and strategic options made reference to the role of capturing land values and New Town powers, but so far the draft framework refers only to two potential 'garden village' developments. The draft GMSF was published in autumn 2016, and was subject to some strong reactions on issues such as green belt. Greater Manchester's new mayor, Andy Burnham, has initiated a review.

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<sup>i</sup> Further details are available from the Greater Manchester Combined Authority website, at [https://www.greatermanchester-ca.gov.uk/info/20018/greater\\_manchester\\_spatial\\_framework](https://www.greatermanchester-ca.gov.uk/info/20018/greater_manchester_spatial_framework)



issues and opportunities. For combined authorities, data can be aggregated from Local Plans or, to be more robust, can be commissioned directly.

### **Stage 3: Formal consultation on preferred options**

There should be formal consultation on the preferred spatial options and sites identified through stage 2 to complement ongoing engagement activities. A range of engagement techniques should be used throughout the consultation period. Engagement with the public should be an ongoing process, but consultation on growth options is essential to bring people along with the work. A report of the consultation findings should be published, including a final list of proposed sites.

### **Stage 4: Further detailed analysis of preferred sites**

Further detailed analysis of proposed sites should be undertaken as set out in the consultation report. More detailed delivery options should then be analysed and sites for allocation recommended. The output may be an adopted development plan document or supplementary planning document, or the Local Plan.

### **Stage 5: Site allocation and detailed development brief**

Once site allocations have been adopted, a set of clear development briefs should be created for the site/s, setting out, among other things, how the Garden City principles, including the community ownership of land and long-term stewardship of assets, will be put into effect.

Councils may also consider including a high-level policy in the Local Plan setting out the requirements for new communities. These requirements may call for an outline application for the entire site, following a masterplanned approach with a set of design standards and demonstrating how the Garden City principles have been considered – including how rising land values might be shared and re-invested for the long-term benefit of the community through a suitable stewardship body, and how governance arrangements throughout the delivery process will engage with new and existing residents and stakeholders. The policy may also require an implementation plan which demonstrates how the project is deliverable and viable in the long term (including how each development phase or sequence will be an increment that it is sustainable in that the project will not be left ‘hanging’ – i.e. without key facilities or amenities – if economic fortunes change). With a view to encouraging a certain pace of development, the implementation strategy could also set out an approach to ensure continued delivery should a site become ‘stuck’. A council could set out its own requirements for this in the Local Plan policy.

### **Stage 6: Establishing a delivery vehicle, including land ownership and finance**

The form of the local delivery body, and the management/governance structures involved, may vary from one Garden City location to another, but in each case it will have a direct impact on the financial and delivery mechanism available.<sup>25</sup> Normally, the local authority/ies where the Garden City is located will be best placed to lead the process of deciding what form of delivery vehicle is most suitable. In so doing, the local authority/ies should engage in an open discussion with key partners – landowners, developers, neighbouring authorities, local enterprise partnerships, etc. The structure of the local delivery vehicle, and its governance arrangements, must reflect partners’ aspirations and requirements, and should be determined through a process of open discussion between key delivery partners.

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<sup>25</sup> A TCPA Practical Guide on the financing and delivery of new Garden Cities, *Guide 2: Finance and Delivery (Garden City Standards for the 21st Century. Practical Guides for Creating Successful New Communities)*, which explores the options in more detail is available at <https://www.tcpa.org.uk/guidance-for-delivering-new-garden-cities>

## 4.3 Planning permission

Recent history has shown that it can take many years to obtain planning permission for the development of a new community. Outline permission must be granted, and then usually each phase of development is submitted in turn for detailed planning consent. This approach is time consuming but enables a transparent process to be put in place (supported by necessary assessments such as environmental impact assessment and strategic environmental assessment of proposals) and provides the flexibility to adapt to inevitable change over what is a long delivery period.

A downside to this approach is that ambitions can be watered down over time. A delivery vehicle must commit to ensuring that the high standards set out in the design brief are adhered to throughout the development process. The right financial model can ensure that viability assessments do not threaten the provision of important community assets and genuinely affordable housing.

One of the fundamental benefits of using an approach to identifying need and locations that is underpinned by the principles set out in this Practical Guide is that it should help to speed up the planning consent process by providing the right evidence and community engagement processes. Meaningful engagement with local people, combined with a commitment to provide high-quality design and good community facilities and services in the development, can also help to encourage local support for a project, which can, in turn, also help to speed up the process of consent.

# 5 Designating new Garden Cities

One of the key lessons to be drawn from past experience is that successful approaches to delivering new communities (such as the post-war New Towns programme) were set within a strong national policy framework – for example the dispersal of population from London or Glasgow.

The Housing White Paper and the Neighbourhood Planning Act's commitment to update the New Towns Act to provide the option of introducing locally accountable development corporations promises to be an important step towards a comprehensive approach to delivering new communities once a location has been identified.

However, this would not deal with the process of identifying sites. There is a need for a nationally or regionally expressed policy to decide the number, scale and broad areas of search for the location of new settlements, thus providing the context for local decision-making.

One approach would be for the government to identify 'areas of search' for new Garden Cities. The local authority, or group of authorities, would then approach the minister, present the evidence base, and ask him or her to use the New Towns Act to designate the area and create a development corporation. The support of the Department for Communities and Local Government, as sponsoring department, and of HM Treasury and neighbouring authorities and statutory bodies and agencies would have been nurtured as the locally led planning process unfolded.

There is a recent precedent in the growth area studies for national policy that provided focused areas of search to support decision-making. If taken forward, this policy would need to consider the wider spatial role of new communities in the context of the nation as a whole, including the relationship of such communities to future infrastructure provision and resource use. National policy would also be needed to provide some detail on governance standards and the operation of development corporations, and to establish broad expectations in terms of design and technology.

It is extremely important for the legitimacy of the designation process that such a policy should have parliamentary approval. The lesson of recent history is that strategic approaches to growth which do not have democratic endorsement are liable to be very short lived.

The approval of such a policy might be modelled on the process for preparing national policy statements set out in the Planning Act 2008. There would also be a need for a strong supportive relationship with government, requiring an experienced and motivated team within central government that could secure inter-departmental agreements. Outline stages in the process could include:

- The creation of a national spatial plan for housing grounded on a sound evidence base, using the principles set out in Section 3 of this Practical Guide as a basis. The plan would identify areas of search and set out a dedicated consent mechanism for new Garden Cities.
- Needs and site assessment studies, undertaken by local authorities or groups of local authorities within the areas of search, setting out a design brief for the sequential testing of sites (the brief would be consulted on).
- A public inquiry on the shortlisted site/s, including consideration of the most appropriate delivery vehicle.
- Site designation and the creation of a Garden City development corporation (where this has been identified as the most appropriate delivery vehicle).

## **Should new Garden Cities be considered ‘nationally significant infrastructure’?**

It has been suggested in some quarters that the 2008 major infrastructure planning regime could be used to designate large-scale housing development, by including housing as major infrastructure within its provisions. This route is unlikely to be fruitful, partly because the 2008 regime was developed for specific kinds of discrete infrastructure and therefore does not contain provisions for establishing the development corporations that are at the heart of the New Towns model.

Put simply, the complexity of creating a whole new town is such that there is much more to do, over a much longer timescale, than building specific infrastructure. It is a ‘vast and beautiful tapestry versus a handkerchief’.<sup>26</sup> It is not ‘built’ in one go, but ‘grown’ over several decades. The Housing and Planning Act 2016 creates a new power for an element of housing to be included in nationally significant infrastructure planning applications. The provision is for up to 500 homes, which do not have to be geographically connected with the infrastructure. The TCPA does not see the logic of this threshold or how it can lead to good place-making outcomes.<sup>27</sup>

### **Towards strategically enabled, locally led designation**

The amendment to the New Towns Act 1981 set out in the Neighbourhood Planning Act is an important step towards the modernisation needed to unlock a new generation of Garden Cities using New Towns Act powers. However, there remain several other key amendments necessary to make the legislation fit for purpose. These include the need to enshrine good place-making principles and environmental standards in the objects and powers of development corporations, including requirements for the long-term stewardship of community and development corporation assets, and a fairer balance of compensation when using compulsory purchase powers. There is an opportunity to address these issues through any forthcoming secondary legislation. The TCPA is exploring the details of the locally led designation process under the current system, even in the absence of a national plan. This throws up issues of accountability, borrowing requirements, and the extent to which the process is plan led.

The legislative process and the commitment to update the NPPF in relation to new settlements provide an opportunity for the government to explore the policy support needed to facilitate a strategically enabled but locally led designation process.

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26 *Forward into the Past: Garden Cities*. David Lock Associates, Jun. 2014. <http://www.davidlock.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/07/forward-into-the-past.pdf>

27 *Putting Garden Cities at the Heart of the Housing and Planning Bill*. Parliamentary Briefing on Amendments to the Housing and Planning Bill. TCPA, Jan. 2016 (revised version). <https://www.tcpa.org.uk/campaigning-gardencities>

# 6

## Sources of further information

### **TCPA Guides**

The TCPA has produced a suite of guidance outlining practical steps for all those interested in making 21st-century Garden Cities a reality. Guidance provides detail and case studies on a wide range of key issues, including planning, investment, land assembly, delivery, and long-term stewardship.

#### **Garden City Standards for the 21st Century: Practical Guides for Creating Successful New Communities**

*Guide 1: Locating and Consenting new Garden Cities* (2017)

*Guide 2: Finance and Delivery* (2017)

*Guide 3: Design and Masterplanning* (2017)

*Guide 4: Planning for Energy and Climate Change* (2016)

*Guide 5: Homes for All* (2016)

*Guide 6: I'd Love to Live There! Planning for Culture and the Arts* (2016)

*Guide 7: Planning for Green and Prosperous Places* (2017)

*Guide 8: Healthy Bodies, Healthy Minds: Creating Health-Promoting Environments* (2017)

*Guide 9: Long-Term Stewardship* (2017 – forthcoming)

All available at <https://www.tcpa.org.uk/guidance-for-delivering-new-garden-cities>

#### **Other TCPA guidance for councils and delivery partners**

*Built Today, Treasured Tomorrow – A Good Practice Guide to Long-Term Stewardship* (2014)

*Creating Garden Cities and Suburbs Today: A Guide for Councils* (2013)

*Land Value Capture and Infrastructure Delivery through SLICs* (2012)

*Creating Garden Cities and Suburbs Today: Policies, Practices, Partnerships and Model Approaches* (2012)

*Nothing Gained by Overcrowding!* (2012)

*Re-imagining Garden Cities for the 21st Century: Benefits and Lessons in Bringing forward Comprehensively Planned New Communities* (2011)

All available at <https://www.tcpa.org.uk/guidance-for-delivering-new-garden-cities>

#### **National Planning Policy Framework**

The National Planning Policy Framework, published in March 2012, sets out the government's planning policies for England and how they are expected to be applied.

Available at

[https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/6077/2116950.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/6077/2116950.pdf)

#### **National Planning Practice Guidance**

National Planning Practice Guidance adds further context to, and should be considered together with, the NPPF. Available at <http://planningguidance.communities.gov.uk/>

#### **Homes and Communities Agency**

The Homes and Communities Agency (HCA) is an executive non-departmental public body, sponsored by the Department for Communities and Local Government. The HCA can provide specific advice on large-scale development and the government's 'Locally-led Garden Villages, Towns and Cities' programme. Further details on the programme are available from Fionnuala Lennon at [Fionnuala.Lennon@hca.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:Fionnuala.Lennon@hca.gsi.gov.uk)

<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/homes-and-communities-agency>