



CREATING NEW TOWNS

FAST AND WELL

Discussion Paper



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

For the first time in 50 years, there is a national commitment to building a new generation of new towns. With the severity of Britain's housing crisis, this is exciting news. But as history shows us, the location and design of new towns is critical to them growing into prosperous and liveable communities. They can fail.

This paper lays out principles for selecting the location and design of new towns, along with policy changes that will make it easier to build new towns quickly, well and with the maximum boost to British economic growth and productivity. We then use these principles to produce a shortlist of twelve new towns from a long list of 50 options that were identified through a combination of internal workshops, spatial analysis, and desk-based research.

New towns should be located in:

- Places that are in an area with acute housing need;
- Places with strong links to existing cities or towns, especially those which have a large housing shortage;
- Places with room for at least 10,000 homes today and future expansion opportunities;
- Places where new homes can be popular and successful by using existing or planned infrastructure rather than spending extra money and time developing major new projects;
- Places that make use of existing plans or proposals that can be developed at pace, rather than creating completely new plans;
- Places that do not need to expand into National Landscapes, flood plains or Sites of Special Scientific Interest in order to grow (though these places can be ones that need to use green belt land to grow); and
- Places with good public transport links to encourage sustainable lifestyles, not just collections of poorly-connected sustainable buildings.

To speed up delivery of new towns, we suggest the Government should:

- Use its mandate to draft Acts of Parliament to supply infrastructure and speed up planning;
- Amend the National Planning Policy Framework to designate new towns as critical national priorities to reduce uncertainty and speed up approvals when Acts of Parliament are inappropriate;
- Revert the duty under section 85 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 to requirements made before 2023 as the change could damage the viability of new towns by requiring developments to pay millions if they are near national landscapes;
- Commission an independent review of the scientific evidence base that underpins habitats regulations to help remove any restrictions that are not robust, reasonable, and effective;
- Make a Written Ministerial Statement to exempt the towns from nutrient neutrality regulations that can hold up delivery;
- Empower elected mayors and unitary authorities to develop aligned approaches to transport, housing, and place-making;
- Extend the power of development corporations to include transport in addition to planning and let more homes be jointly consented with nationally significant infrastructure projects;
- Create a pattern book of pre-approved street and building types to empower small and medium builders; and
- Adopt a strategic, low-risk approach to environmental assessment for the entire development.

Our design principles to ensure new towns are popular, productive and attractive places, while requiring less land are:

- Take a town first, not a field-led approach, to site selection;
- Build healthy places in which it is easy and safe to move about by foot or cycle in addition to cars;
- Create communities, not just homes by focusing on different tenure types;
- Create green places lined with gardens, garden squares, street trees and parks;
- Make sustainable places, not just sustainable buildings;
- Create new towns, not just collections of spread out homes, by building gentle density development of three to eight storeys; and
- Make mixed-use places by building offices, commercial and residential in the same neighbourhoods.

We have used our location and design principles to shortlist twelve new towns, which can be prosperous, liveable, and well-connected communities. The twelve proposals are:

- Greater Cambridge: an expansion to the city to unlock more homes, laboratory space and innovation.
- Tempsford, Bedfordshire: a well-connected new town making the most of new infrastructure with excellent access to Cambridge, Oxford, and Central London.
- Winslow, Buckinghamshire: an opportunity to 'mirror' the town across the newly restored East West Rail that runs to Oxford and Milton Keynes.
- Cheddington, Buckinghamshire: a new town built along the West Coast Main Line, which will greatly benefit from increased capacity once HS2 opens.
- Salfords, Surrey: this new town could relieve the housing crisis in Brighton and London while helping fund upgrades to the nearby Brighton Main Line and the M23.
- Greater Oxford: an expansion to the city to unlock more homes, laboratory space and innovation.
- Iver, Buckinghamshire: plenty of land right next to two Elizabeth line stations.
- Hatfield Peverel, Essex: a new town 'mirrored' across the railway line, which is well served by the A12 and the Great Eastern Main Line.
- Bristol Extension: help to alleviate the worst housing crisis outside the greater south east by building on one of the most restrictive green belts in the UK.
- Chippenham, Wiltshire: organically extend the market town to its east with a new gentle density expansion.
- York: extend the beautiful city to its ring road, helping to ease the worst housing shortage in the North.
- Arden Cross (Birmingham Interchange): build a new town adjacent to the new HS2 station, Birmingham airport, the M42, A45, and a potential tram extension to Birmingham centre.

We anticipate that these new towns, when fully completed, will add £13-28bn per annum to the UK's GDP and over 550,000 new homes.

CONTEXT

This paper is drafted to help inform the work of the New Towns Taskforce by suggesting principles for site selection and delivery at pace, and by sketching out how ‘gentle density’ could enhance the value of the new towns created. We come up with a list of twelve locations we suggest for new towns plus one reserve, drawn from a long list of 50 possible options (see appendix 1 for the full list). Building in these twelve locations could start tomorrow because they are in areas with high housing demand so they don’t need subsidies and are well-connected with existing and planned infrastructure.

These recommendations have emerged from a series of internal workshops and desk analysis led by Britain Remade and Create Streets in October and November 2024 with further material taken from previous research and projects. We have also reviewed our findings with a range of transport, legal and planning experts.

The proposed new towns are listed below.

Table 1: proposed new towns

Town	County	Potential homes	Existing (in bold) or planned infrastructure
Greater Cambridge	Cambridgeshire	150,000-200,000	East West Rail, New tramway, A14, M11
Tempsford	Bedfordshire	150,000-200,000	East West Rail, East Coast Main Line, A428, A1(M)
Winslow	Buckinghamshire	15,000-25,000	East West Rail (opening next year)
Cheddington	Buckinghamshire	25,000-50,000	West Coast Main Line (extra capacity post- HS2)
Salfords	Surrey	37,500-75,000	Brighton Main Line (upgrade planned), M23
Greater Oxford	Oxfordshire	50,000-75,000	New Tramway, New station at Begbroke, Cherwell Valley Line, Oxford-Bicester Line, A34, A40
Iver	Buckinghamshire	20,000-30,000	Elizabeth Line, M25, M4
Hatfield Peverel	Essex	15,000-20,000	Great Eastern Main Line, A12 (upgrade planed)
Bristol Extension	Bristol, North Somerset, Gloucestershire	30,000-50,000	Portishead Branch Line, M4, A4174 , Potential Mass Transit
Chippenham	Wiltshire	10,000	TransWilts rail (new passing loop at Melksham)
Greater York	North Yorkshire	25,000-50,000	Harrogate Line, York Outer Ring Road (upgrade planned), New tramway
Arden Cross (Birmingham Interchange)	West Midlands, Warwickshire	30,000-50,000	HS2, West Midlands Metro Extension, M42, A45
Reserve: South East Sheffield	South Yorkshire	15,000 - 30,000	Sheffield Metroland Supertram

Taking the lower estimate of the potential number of new homes we expect that these twelve new towns would boost the UK’s GDP by between £13 and 28 billion per year.

This comes through one main channel: workers who move to one of these new towns can expect access to higher paying jobs because the new towns are well-connected to the UK’s productive cities. This calculation takes the median non-London UK wage and models the expected uplift to a combination of the median wage in the local authority in which the new town would be built and the median wage of the nearest shortage city. It also includes a calculation of the boost to GDP that will come from constructing the estimated 557,500 homes over the course of 10 years.

WHERE: SITE SELECTION PRINCIPLES

We have used seven key principles to select this shortlist of new towns from a long list of fifty possible sites where homes are needed and could be built without undue delay. These principles were:

1

Places that need homes: areas where unmet demand is creating personal distress and slowing economic growth.

We measured this through (a) average house prices compared to build costs, (b) homelessness, (c) rental affordability, and (d) social housing waiting lists. The economic and social impacts of the housing crisis should guide where we build new towns. When new towns are built in areas where the average house price is much higher than the cost of building the house, there is more surplus value created that can be spent on infrastructure upgrades or on social housing. If the Government wants to maximise the amount of infrastructure and social housing that can be paid for by the new towns, they will need to build in areas with high house prices. Likewise new towns should be built where they will do the most to alleviate the human costs of the housing crisis. With over 300,000 families waiting on social housing waiting lists across London, there's a moral need to consider building new towns within easy reach of the capital.

Why creating new towns in areas of high demand gives you more 'bang for your buck'

- High rents and house prices lock young workers out of the most productive work. In many cases, workers moving to a higher-paying job in a shortage city end up worse off after housing costs are accounted for.¹ As a result, some workers do not accept jobs that would see them earning (and paying tax) more.
- New towns are most likely to succeed, both economically in their own right and in alleviating housing pressures, when they are well-connected to existing cities with high unmet demand.
- Local shortages can have significant knock-on spillover effects. For example, London's high rents price some workers out of the capital and into commuting from Brighton. In turn, this bids up rent in Brighton and pushes some workers out to cheaper nearby towns like Worthing or Lancing.
- There are similar stories across the UK where shortages in high-wage cities reduce affordability across their wider region.
- New homes that are in, or connected to via fast public transport, shortage areas can therefore have much greater and more widespread benefits in terms of employment and affordability than the average new home.
- Planning gain, land values surging in response to planning permission being granted, will be highest in areas of high demand. This, in turn, generates additional funds to invest in infrastructure and affordable homes, including at social rents. For example, a hectare of undeveloped land in the South East can gain £3.6m in value when planning permission is granted, a 100 times increase over its initial value.
- In some areas of Britain, by contrast, major developments can only proceed with grant funding due to low land values.

¹ Stansbury, Anna, Turner, Dan, and Balls, Ed. "Tackling the UK's regional economic inequality: Binding constraints and avenues for policy intervention." *Contemporary Social Science* 18.3-4 (2023): 318-356.

2

Places that can 'plug in': linked to an existing city or town.

All the new towns proposed are urban extension or satellite towns to existing cities or towns with unmet demand. We've taken the 50 largest urban areas as defined by the Office for National Statistics and then calculated the difference between the median house price and the cost to build a house. This represents the uplift that each home provides, which could be used to build infrastructure for the new town and provide affordable housing. The 10 cities with the highest uplift potential are listed in table 2 (overleaf).

Table 2: Britain's 10 cities or towns with the largest housing shortages

Urban area	Median house price 2023	Average house price per m ²	Estimated construction cost	Uplift potential
London	£535,000	£6,369	£249,732	£285,268
Cambridge	£492,750	£4,928	£257,100	£235,650
Oxford	£450,000	£4,412	£273,156	£176,844
Brighton and Hove	£439,750	£4,311	£273,156	£166,594
Watford	£420,000	£4,200	£257,100	£162,900
Slough	£371,000	£3,637	£273,156	£97,844
Bristol	£347,999	£3,446	£257,752	£90,247
Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole	£343,000	£3,396	£257,752	£85,248
Southend-on-Sea	£340,000	£3,400	£257,100	£82,900
York	£300,000	£3,371	£220,453	£79,547

Estimated construction cost is the *average regional property size* multiplied by *average regional construction cost per m²*

3 Places with potential: future-proofed sites with room to grow.

All of the proposed new towns have room for at least 10,000 homes today and future room to build more streets and squares later in the century, again protecting new towns' ability to support economic growth into the future.

4 Using history and investment wisely: places that use existing or planned infrastructure rather than requiring new infrastructure.

All of our proposed new towns make some use of existing or planned infrastructure though five would benefit from substantive new infrastructure as well that could be delivered alongside construction of the town (we suggest these for later phases, see below). We have specifically sought to create 'mirror towns' where Victorian stations were located to one side of a historic town, leading to the possibility of extending the town on the other side making better use of existing rail infrastructure.

The potential for 'Mirror towns': what, why and how

Due to patterns of land ownership or route selection, many Victorian stations were not built within a historic town centre but on its periphery. Perhaps the best-known example is Cambridge, where the railway was built to the east of the city, with little development on the other side of the line until the 1940s, a century after the railway arrived.

In some cases, the Victorian or twentieth century town naturally expanded and grew around the new station. But in many others, it has not and the train station has been left on the town's periphery raising the potential to create a mirror town on the 'other side' of the tracks and making use of existing infrastructure. Examples include Winslow, Salfords, Hatfield Peverel and Iver.

Right: A recent example of a 'mirror town.' A plan for 2,100 homes at a 'gentle density' of between 39 and 150 homes per hectare (net) at West Horndon Station, Essex. The existing town is to the north of the train line.



5 Places with plans: using ‘ones we prepared earlier.’

Over the last 50 years many plans and proposals have been made for many towns and train lines. Few have come to pass. Wherever possible, new towns should take advantage of this pre-existing work to speed up delivery and not reinvent the wheel.

6 Prepared to build in green belt but not in National Landscapes.

Eight of the proposed new towns involve or might involve some building within green belts. Green belts were originally designed to prevent environmentally-damaging urban sprawl, but because our suggested new towns are dense and well-connected these concerns relating to existing conurbations ought not to apply. None of our suggestions involve building in National Landscapes (National Parks or Areas of Outstanding National Beauty), flood plains, or Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI).

7 Sustainable places, not just collections of sustainable buildings.

New towns should encourage sustainable lifestyles. By creating new towns at very low densities far from reliable public transport, new towns risk locking in higher carbon emitting lifestyles for decades. People living in cities emit fifty per cent less carbon than people who live outside cities. All the proposed towns encourage gentle densification and building in the most environmentally, as well as most economically, sensible areas.

HOW: PROCESS PRINCIPLES

Attempts to create new settlements at scale over the last 50 years have failed. They have either led to nothing, led to very little or advanced expensively at a tragically slow pace. When they have created new homes, they have not created new towns but rather just spread out collections of homes with (due to much lower densities) far fewer houses and poor use of public transport. We need to do much better. We therefore suggest five principles for the governance of new town creation.

1 Use the Government's political mandate.

The Government has an unarguable electoral mandate to create new towns. Wherever possible, the government should therefore use Acts of Parliament to supply infrastructure. This route reduces the likelihood of judicial review and, with political will, can be completed long before any planning application, which is itself likely to be appealed in the courts. Acts of Parliament should authorise the new towns, and should minimise, if not remove, the need for any secondary approvals. This will avoid the ridiculous situation HS2 has landed itself in of having to obtain over 8,000 individual consent after it was authorised by legislation. To support the creation of new settlements in circumstances where Acts of Parliament are inappropriate, the National Planning Policy Framework should be amended to designate new towns as being a Critical National Priority, thereby smoothing their consenting. At least three other national policy changes would also support the creation of new towns.

- a. Whilst none of our proposed new towns are within National Landscapes, the duty under section 85 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 should be changed back to requirements made before 2023. The recent change has a deleterious impact on projects, even when outside National Landscapes and is causing developers to pay millions, which could damage the viability and value of new towns.
- b. The need to protect important and unique natural habitats must be balanced with the need for homes, but some of the current laws have been severely impacting housing delivery. The biggest challenge comes from the Habitats Regulations which protect Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) and Special Protection Areas (SPAs).

One such problem is the requirement to limit recreational activities that SACs and SPAs are sensitive to, such as dog walking, through the adoption of Strategic Access Management and Monitoring (SAMM) measures, and the provision of Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspaces (SANGs). The burden of providing these now falls on new housing, leading to increased development costs and long delays and It is not clear that this approach is always reasonable or actually based in fact.

The interpretation of the legal requirements by the relevant authorities appears to be overly risk averse, and the policy implementations gold plated. The government should commission an independent review of the scientific evidence base that underpins the policy of SANGs and SAMMs to ensure that it is robust, reasonable and effective. This should also take into account the urban characteristics of new developments, as it may be that places that are denser and more walkable are less likely to generate as many trips. Following this review, if any new towns do require a SANG then this would be a relatively simple task. The current regime favours a strategic approach, so a SANG could be planned from the start and delivered early and should be designed to be multifunctional and beautiful.

- c. Nutrient neutrality is an even bigger blocker on development, affecting schemes across the whole country. The issue is discharges from wastewater treatment works; any increase in housing will lead to a very slightly higher increase in nutrients (such as nitrates and phosphates) being discharged. In line with the 'precautionary principle', the relevant authorities cannot permit any increase whatsoever where it might impact an SAC or SPA.

Unfortunately the burden has once again fallen on housing and planning, despite the majority of nutrients in our rivers coming from diffuse sources such as farmland and runoff from roads, and the fact that the water industry has a robust regulatory scheme that is meant to deal with such issues. The burden should fall on water companies and they must upgrade water treatment works to provide a higher level of treatment to reduce nutrient discharges. A written ministerial statement to this effect should suffice to remove the risk of nutrient neutrality holding up new town delivery.

The outsized impact of Chiltern Beechwoods SAC

Chiltern Beechwoods SAC covers a 1,300 hectare area on the Hertfordshire Buckinghamshire border and is protected for its unique beech forest and grassland habitats, and a population of stag beetles. It attracts a large number of visitors, partly due to the popular Ashridge Estate owned by the National Trust.

A Habitats Regulation Assessment (HRA) was undertaken in 2021 which found that the habitat may be under threat from too many visitors. The reaction to this was an effective ban on housebuilding for the best part of a year within a 12.6 km radius of the SAC until a mitigation plan was put in place. The plan requires any new development to either deliver, or pay into the delivery of, a new SANG to divert visitors away from the SAC as well as a per property contribution to the management plan (costed at £18 million). This impacted the delivery of homes across several authority areas and added to costs. Each new home in Dacorum will need to contribute £914 to the management plan and £4,252 to a new SANG.

It also prevented the delivery of up to 150 homes through a neighbourhood led brownfield housing delivery scheme in Chesham, some 10km away, as it would not be possible for brownfield sites to provide a SANG. The council investigated creating a strategic SANG for the town, but did not have the funds to do so, this is despite the fact that the town has unrivalled access to open countryside (it's a destination for walkers) and a great park and the new housing would be 'car light' and generate less trips, and not to mention that only 2 per cent of existing trips to the SAC came from Chesham.

2 Empower elected mayors and unitary authorities.

It is impossible to create functioning towns without an economically and spatially aligned approach to transport, new homes and place-making. Wherever possible, new towns should be delivered by empowered directly elected mayors with powers over both highways and planning. The disconnect between highways and planning is a consistent barrier to the smooth delivery and to the quality of new settlements.

3 Extend the power of development corporations to include transport as well as planning.

This could be done by primary legislation within the proposed Planning and Infrastructure Bill. Where empowered mayors with unitary authority are not available, extended development corporations will normally be the right framework for delivery. Another opportunity is to revisit the 2017 Ministry of Housing, Communities, and Local Government guidance on the 2016 Housing and Planning Act. This limited the number of homes that could be jointly consented with a Development Consent Order to 500. Scrapping this limit would enable new towns to be jointly consented with new train lines, which might then be funded by the value uplift the new homes provide. This is similar to how the Victorians funded many of the railways we still rely on today by building new homes, towns, and industries alongside new tracks.

4 One code: many hands.

The more we can de-risk the development process by 'bringing planning forward' and creating a pattern book of pre-approved street and building types the more we can unlock and empower small and medium builders and self-builders. Britain is dangerously unique in its over-reliance on a small number of large developers. The new town programme can help change this by de-risking the process.



A pattern book of pre-approved house types is like a recipe book for homes. They were especially common in the 18th century and supported housing booms by allowing builders and landowners to rapidly build homes. Such an approach could be used today to de-risk planning and allow SMEs to compete.

4 A system wired for speed:

Recent attempts to build new towns such as Ebbsfleet have seen construction held up by the planning system, particularly around environmental protections. The problem is not the fact but the process of environmental protection which requires not just a strategic assessment but detailed assessments for each individual project. This has increased costs and created huge delays and in some cases prevented delivery. For new towns to be delivered at pace, we should adopt a strategic, low-risk approach to environmental assessment with the requirement to produce an environmental impact assessment suspended on a development-by-development basis provided the impact of the entire town has been assessed. This could follow the approach of offshore wind in the British Energy Security Strategy which allows for environmental considerations to be made at a strategic level, rather than on a project-by-project basis. This both speeds up development and delivers better results for nature.

WHAT: DESIGN PRINCIPLES

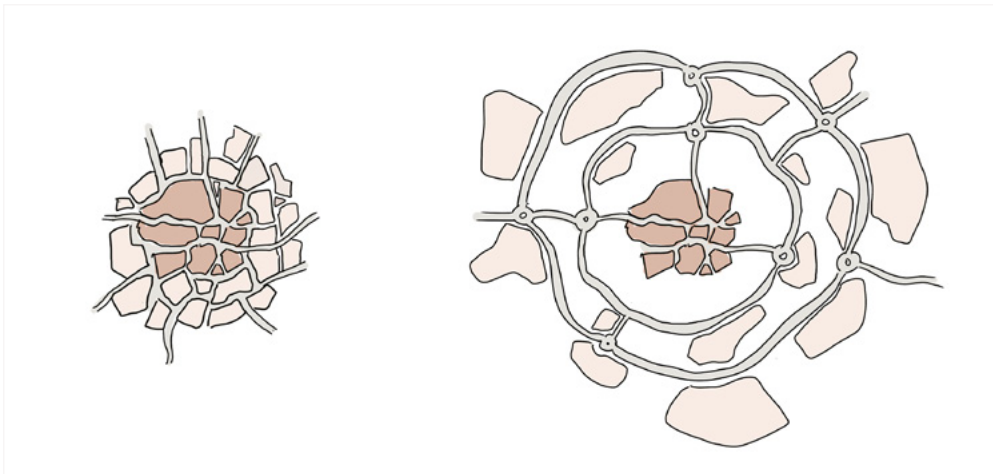
To ensure that new towns can be built more rapidly and require less land whilst also being popular, productive and attractive places, new towns should be designed following seven key principles.

1 Less haste, more speed: take a town first, not field-led approach to specific site selection.

The question is not 'what field is most rapidly available' but 'what specific place works for access to the new town and movement within it.' A 'new town' in the wrong place which is hard to reach will not happen or will happen badly or too slowly.

2 Create healthy places in which it is easy, pleasant and safe to move about by foot or cycle as well as by car.

How much we walk and cycle every day has a measurable and important consequence for our personal health. New towns' street design and spatial layout should make it natural to do the right thing. Thanks to the government's recent change from a 'vision-led', not 'prediction-led' approach to transport planning this should now be easier than hitherto.



Above: Two ways of extending an existing town or city.

Below: Urban extensions in the Netherlands with excellent infrastructure that make cycling and walking the first choice for getting around.



3 Create communities, not just homes.

New towns should have a mix of different tenures including owner-occupied, private rented, and social housing. By diversifying the tenure types, the new towns will be accessible to everyone, not just the people who are ready to buy a home. Key workers who will be integral to the new towns' success should have access to affordable housing. Every home built in our suggested new town locations will produce surplus value that can be used to help provide social housing without the need for a grant or subsidy from the Treasury.

4 Create green places lined with gardens, garden squares, street trees and parks.

As long as it is accessible and contained within an urban form with 'clear backs and fronts' urban greenery is the miracle pill that is good for our physical and mental well-being. New towns should be richly layered with trees and gardens. Green spaces should be safely private or clearly public, not in-between.



5 Create sustainable places, not just sustainable buildings.

The weight with which we tread upon the planet is not just about how we heat and insulate our homes, important though that is. It is also about how we move about, about how the 'form factor' (or shape) of our buildings affects their thermal efficiency and about the durability and residence of the places and buildings that we create. It's not very sustainable to create a place and destroy it less than 20 years later as happened to much post-war development. New towns should be sustainable places that last and make it easy to tread lightly. The evolving requirements of attractive buildings in the future should encourage future residents to find new uses for them, not pull them down after one generation as we have done with so many unpopular post-war buildings.

6

Create new towns, not just collections of spread-out houses, with gentle density development of three to eight storeys.

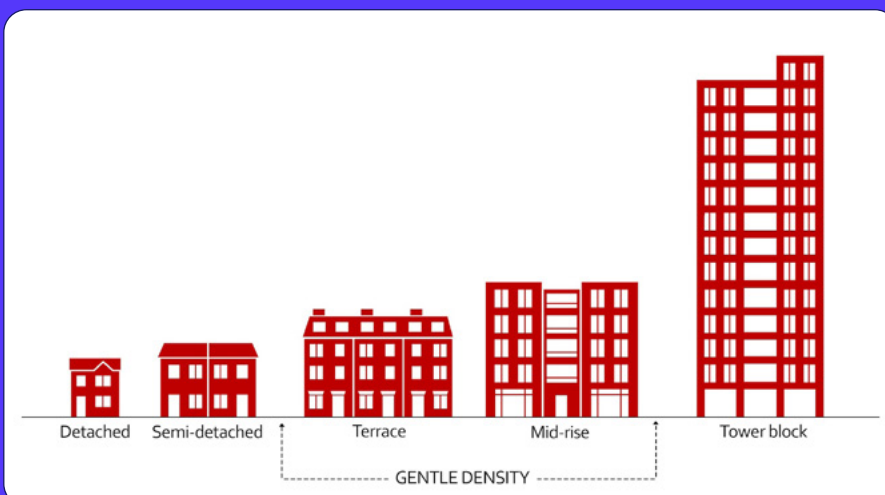
The 'stated preference' of most British people is for a detached house, which is what we have normally built over the last 60 years. However, the 'revealed preference' is often for gentle density of terraced homes and mansion flats which can capture most of the advantages of detached houses (personal space, a back garden, control over your own immediate environment) with many additional advantages of walkable proximity to pubs, shops and transport, easier creation of town centres and much less land take. We should create more of these 'revealed preference' neighbourhoods than we have typically done recently.



The gift of gentle density

Gentle density is the 'missing middle' of place-making between the extremes of tower blocks which maximise density on a given plot and detached homes which are popular but very land-hungry. Evidence strongly shows that 'gentle density' places of terraced homes and mansions blocks with some semi-detached homes and the odd higher building are very often the best way to trade-off between the advantages of lower density living with the high productivity and more efficient land use that comes with slightly higher densities. Polling and pricing shows that people prefer beautiful 'gentle density' places (think Bath or Clifton or Marylebone).

The 'gift of gentle density' is that we can create more homes on less land. For example, on the same amount of land that was used for greenfield development last year we might have built not 112,240 homes but 220,471 homes if we had developed at an historic 'gentle density' of, say, 55 homes per hectare instead of 28.



7 Create mixed-use places by building offices, commercial and residential in the same neighbourhoods.

The rationale is simple: if we want to reduce traffic and the need to travel, we need to make sure that our daily needs are all within close proximity to where we live. This allows more people to walk, or cycle with pleasure more of the time. It's what planners call 'modal shift.' This is the freedom to get around, whether for work, leisure, shopping or school, without the need to rely on a car or public transport. This is nothing new. It is how we used to create places until the mid-twentieth century advent of zoning and traffic modernism. Some level of separation is sensible and desirable: we should not build homes next to a waste incinerator. However, that should not extend to shops, cafes, and offices. In short, we should build towns, not just housing estates with 'boxland' retail parks. The planned settlements of the 20th century, from the pre war garden cities to the post war new towns, were planned to be self-sufficient and self-contained. Not all did, particularly post war. Future new towns will not be able to provide everything within walking distance. But they should be self-contained to a degree, providing most amenities within a short walk.

New(ish) mixed use, walkable development in Tarporley, Cheshire.



OUR TOP TWELVE SUGGESTED NEW TOWNS

Greater Cambridge

Cambridge has been a centre for scientific discovery for centuries. It is where the atom was first split and where the structure of DNA was discovered. Today the city has grown into Europe's largest technology cluster, home to over 5,000 high tech firms, whose discoveries and inventions benefit all of the UK. Yet a lack of homes and new laboratory space is holding the city, and the country, back. Cambridge has the second most expensive housing of Britain's large urban areas after London, pricing out many working people and young, bright researchers. The laboratory vacancy rate in Cambridge is just 1 per cent and Cambridge only has 1/10th the amount of laboratory space compared to Boston, an international rival. Additionally, while well-connected to inter-city destinations like London and Stansted Airport, intra-city travel within Cambridge is reliant on heavily congested roads and poor public transport.

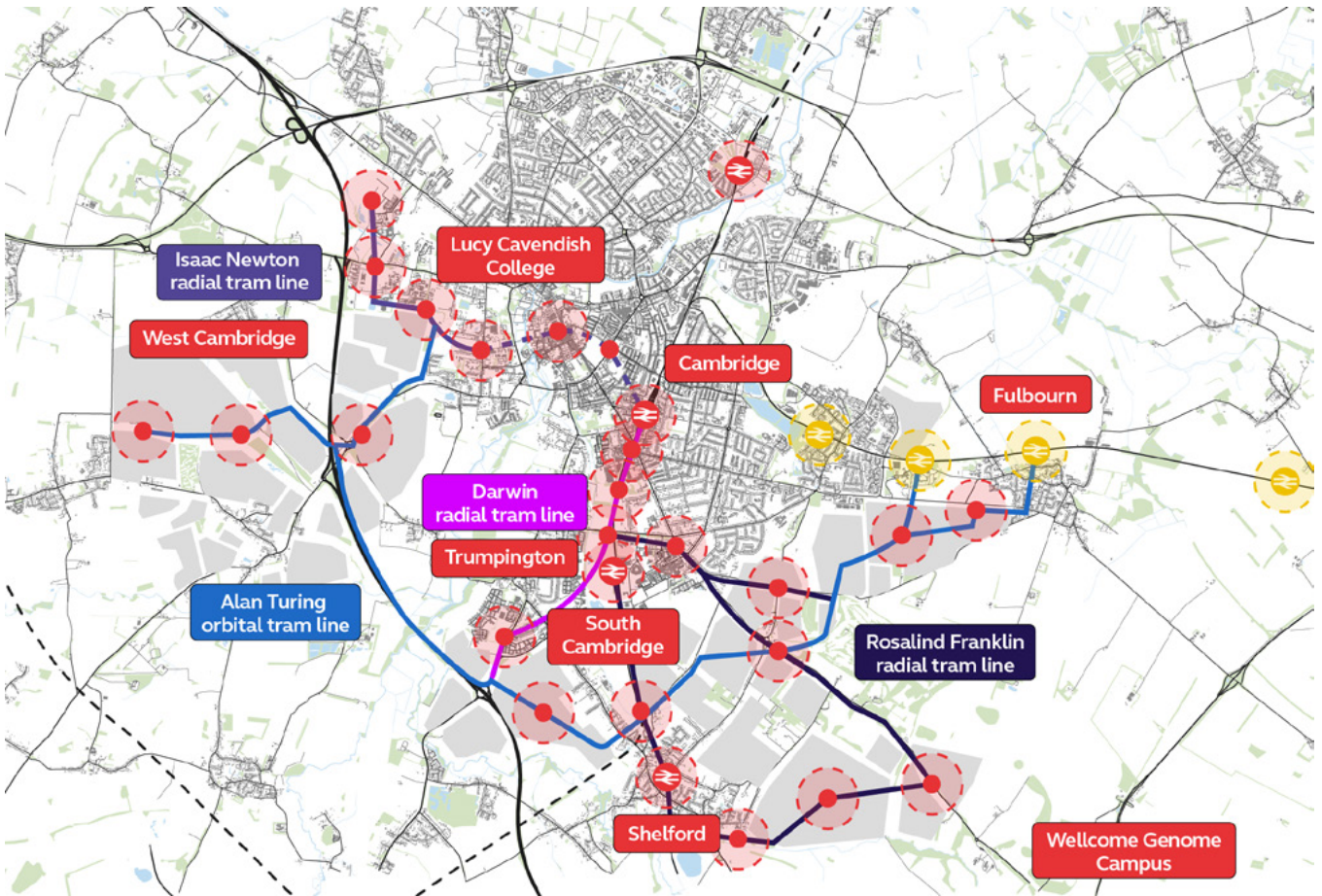
A Greater Cambridge urban extension provides the solution to all of these problems. Building out the city provides space for at least 150,000 homes in mixed-use and beautiful neighbourhoods. There is well-placed land close to the soon-to-open Cambridge South Station near the Biomedical Campus and Addenbroke's hospital. Agricultural fields sit less than a mile west of the city centre, which would be suitable for walkable neighbourhoods. The railway line that passes through Fulbourn to the city's east could have several stations added to it. By allowing more people to live close to high productive jobs, these new homes would boost economic growth. The Ministry of Housing, Communities, and Local Government estimates that building these homes would add £6.4 billion to the UK's economy and £1.5 billion of additional tax receipts.

At the same time these developments could unlock desperately-needed laboratory space. With a committed effort to build in Greater Cambridge, the new labs could become Europe's answer to Silicon Valley. But if we fail to build, the advantages in academic power would go to waste.



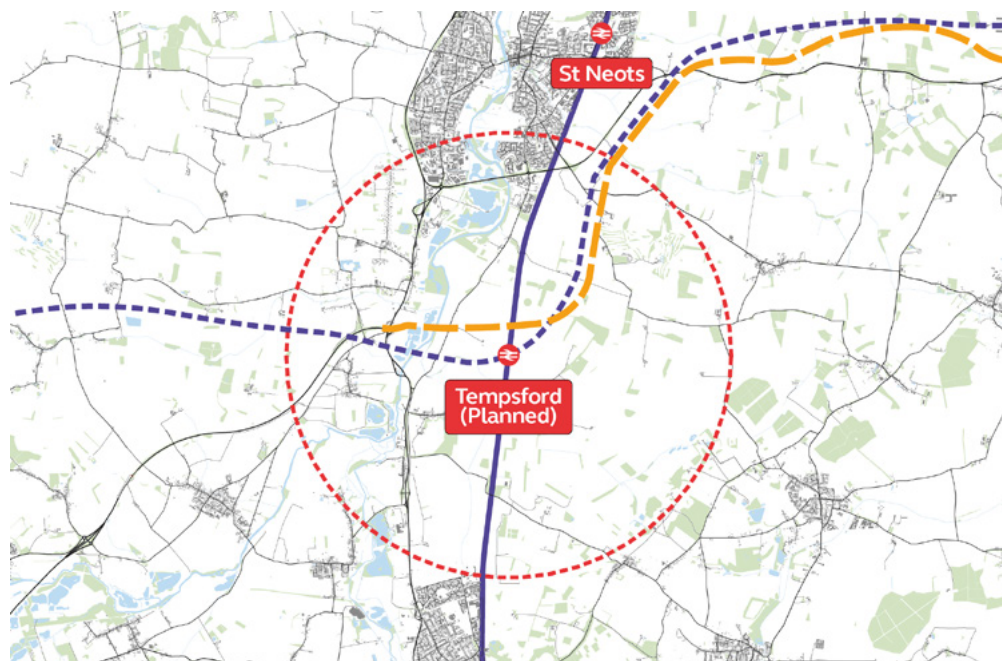
Our Top Twelve Suggested New Towns

Finally, a Greater Cambridge urban extension could be used to fund the transport upgrades that would make it easier to get to the many high quality jobs on offer and to see friends and family around the city. According to the figures in Table 2 at the beginning, every extra home built in Cambridge currently unlocks £235,650 in value uplift that can be spent on infrastructure upgrades. That is a massive amount of money that each new home creates that can be spent making Cambridge a great city. Assuming, very conservatively, that the true figure of value uplift is only half that (£117,825), and that we spend just 10 per cent of that on a tramway for Cambridge, then building 150,000 new homes would still unlock £1.767 billion. This is enough, at high British tram costs, to build a massive 20 mile network. If we were able to reduce British tram construction prices down to the European average, that could fund 42 miles. That large a network would completely revolutionise transport in Cambridge, boosting growth and accessibility. It could all be completely funded just by building new homes.



Tempsford, Bedfordshire

London, Oxford and Cambridge are the three British cities with the most acute housing crises, as can be seen in table 2. They also suffer from acute shortages of employment space, especially for laboratories. The reopening of East West Rail between Oxford and Cambridge offers a remarkable opportunity to alleviate all these shortages simultaneously. East West Rail will meet the East Coast Main Line near a hamlet called Tempsford. The interchange station there will enjoy excellent rail links to Cambridge (20 minutes) Oxford (1 hour), and central London (45 minutes), making it one of the best-connected greenfield sites in Europe. It is an ideal location for a new town.



East West Rail's planned route in dotted blue intersects with the East Coast Main Line at Tempsford and the upgraded A428 is nearby in orange. The dotted line represents 4km from the station.

The area is already benefiting from new infrastructure in the form of the A428 Black Cat to Caxton Gibbet improvement scheme. This unlocks the key infrastructure bottleneck holding back development of the site, giving it a good road connection to both Cambridge and Milton Keynes. It also has a good existing rail connection to central London on the recently-upgraded Thameslink, via nearby St Neots.

At the Budget, the Government confirmed plans to deliver East West Rail. The key infrastructure decision needed for Tempsford new town has thus already been made. Beyond this, improvements to the East Coast Main Line, especially around the Digswell Viaduct, can ensure plentiful rail capacity to London for any conceivable scale of development.

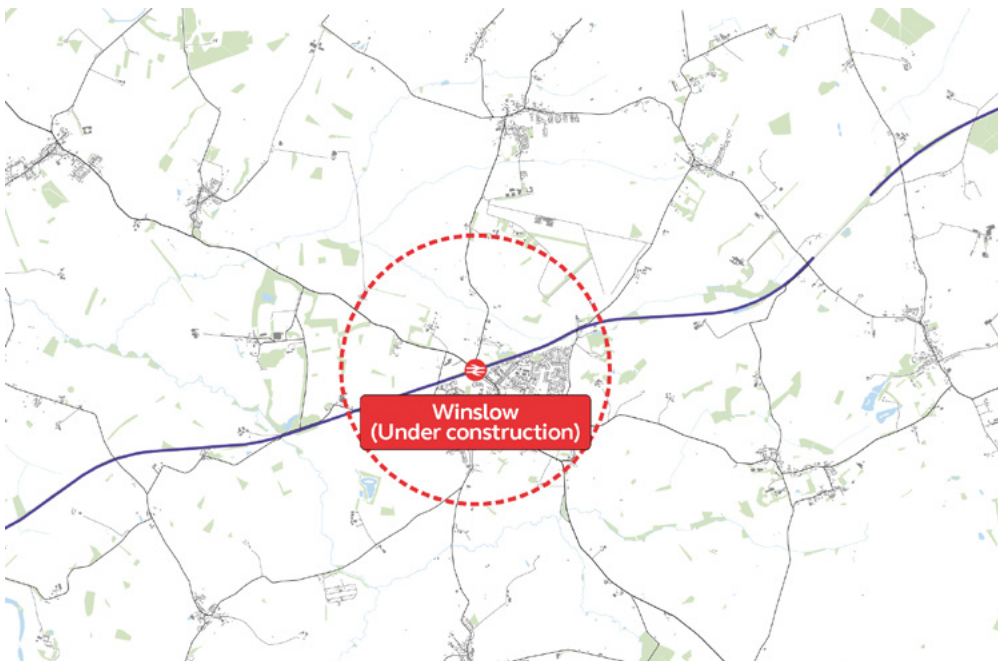
During World War II, an estimated 995 allied agents were transported from RAF Tempsford to or from occupied Europe by 138 and 161 (Special Duty) Squadrons. Many sadly never returned and there is a memorial in Tempsford to 75 known women agents, 20 of whom were killed or committed suicide rather than face arrest and possible torture. It might be considered appropriate to commemorate their legacy in the name of the extended town of Tempsford. One option might be to call it Tempsford Nearne after the two sisters, Eileen and Jacqueline Nearne, both of whom flew to occupied Europe from Tempsford. Another would be Tempsford Baissac in commemoration of Lisse de Baissac whose work in occupied France was particularly important before and after D-Day. Another option would be Tempsford Granville after Christine Granville, a lady of astonishing bravery and reportedly, 'Churchill's favourite spy.'

Winslow, Buckinghamshire

Next year the western section of East West Rail will open, which runs between Oxford and Bletchley/Milton Keynes. On the newly opened section of track there will be one completely new station, Winslow. Sitting on the northern outskirts of town, Winslow station will bring the railway back to the town for the first time in 57 years. Oxford will be less than half an hour on the train and the journey to Milton Keynes will be even shorter.

However, the issue is that the town will fail to fully realise the huge potential benefits that this boost in connectivity will bring because not enough people live near to the station. A Winslow new town would make the most of this historic railway investment.

The town of 4,400 sits almost completely to the southern side of the railway, allowing the town to 'be completed' by mirroring it on the other side of the tracks. Currently the land is non-green belt agricultural land. Conservatively estimated, there are 300-500 hectares of developable land within easy access of the station, providing enough land for a new town of 15,000 to 25,000 homes given a gentle density of 50 homes per hectare. Historic plans for supporting highways exist to assist further expansion.



Winslow station on the soon to open East West Rail. The dotted circle represents a 15 minute walk from the station (1.2km).

These homes would be within walking distance of the station, allowing easy access to the high tech jobs of the future in Milton Keynes and Oxford, while preserving Winslow's market town character. If the future branch of East West Rail is built between Winslow and Aylesbury Vale Parkway, Winslow new town would also benefit from easy access to London Marylebone.

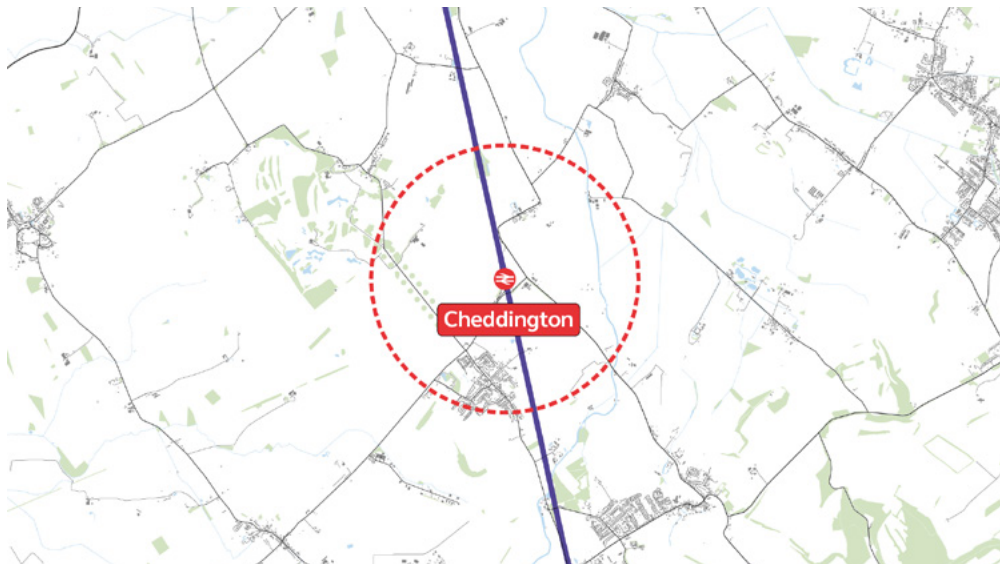
Cheddington, Buckinghamshire

The West Coast Main Line (WCML), which runs from London to Birmingham, Manchester, Liverpool, and Glasgow is currently the busiest mixed-use railway in Europe and is effectively at capacity. But this will change when HS2 opens by 2033. By taking high speed intercity trains on to their own dedicated railway, HS2 will hugely reduce traffic on the WCML, opening up new commuter train capacity into London. To maximise the benefits of building one of the most expensive railways in the world, we should be building new homes and towns along the existing route of the WCML.

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Many of the stations along the WCML are not surrounded by picturesque towns and villages that allow people easy access to the railway, but instead by the occasional car park and agricultural field. By choosing to build new homes within walking distance of these stations, we would be encouraging more environmentally friendly developments and benefiting from the extra capacity that HS2 brings.

Of all the stations on the route, Cheddington station provides perhaps the best opportunity to build a new town. Despite being just 50 minutes from Euston and on one of the busiest railway lines in Britain, Cheddington station is in the bottom 25 per cent of stations by passenger numbers. The reason for this is the railway station is over a kilometre outside of the village and is completely surrounded by fields, instead of the homes which would allow people to use the station freely.



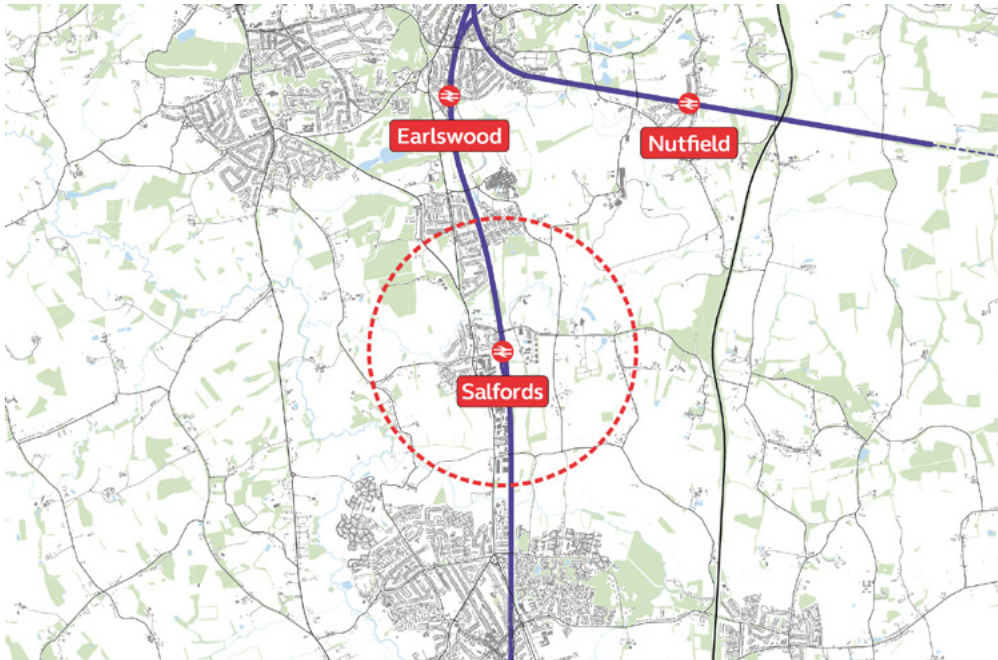
Cheddington station on the West Coast Main Line, which will have extra capacity once HS2 opens. The dotted circle represents a 15 minute walk from the station (1.2km).

However, these fields, which are not designated green belt, provide a perfect location for a gentle density new town fully to make use of the station and the extra services which HS2 will allow. There is enough land near the station to provide 25,000-50,000 homes at a gentle density of 50 homes per hectare. Cheddington's easy access to both London and Milton Keynes makes it an attractive location for working people to easily reach jobs that match their skillset.

Cheddington is not the only location on the WCML capable of hosting more houses. It is only the nearest location to London with an existing station and a large supply of unrestricted land. However other locations, such as Roade in Northamptonshire or Wolverton, just north of Milton Keynes, are also viable. Closer to London, Tring is a possibility, though it would require the release of land from an AONB. The freeing up of capacity on the WCML is one of the greatest new town opportunities of our generation, and the Government should look at founding several towns along its length.

Salfords, Surrey

Brighton is the English city with the fourth worst housing crisis according to the house prices listed in table 2. Yet an urban extension of the city isn't feasible because of the South Downs National Park that wraps around the city. Additionally trains from Brighton to London have to pass through the most congested and complex part of Britain's rail network in the Croydon bottleneck, where 30 per cent more passengers and trains pass through each day than Euston and King's Cross stations combined.



Salfords station on the Brighton Main Line and the M23 to the east. The dotted circle represents a 15 minute walk from the station (1.2km).

A new town along the Brighton Main Line provides an opportunity to relieve Brighton and London's housing crisis, while also providing investment to fix the Croydon bottleneck and add an additional eight trains per hour. Considering that new homes in London create an average of around £285,000 of surplus value that can be used to invest in infrastructure, while homes in Brighton provide an average of £165,000, a new town along the Brighton Main Line would provide a significant opportunity to fund transport upgrades along the delay-prone railway line. Every thousand homes is potentially a quarter of a billion in additional investment into surrounding infrastructure.

Salfords, which lies about halfway between central London and Brighton, is the ideal location for this new town. The railway runs on the eastern outskirts of the village, providing an opportunity to mirror the town on the 'wrong side of the tracks'. The missing half of the town means the station is not used as much as other ones a similar distance from London or Brighton. Despite its good connections, Salfords is in the bottom half of stations by use. A new town would see the station's full potential used.

The new town would also be well served by existing roads. Just two and a half kilometres further east is the M23, where there is the potential to add in a new junction between Gatwick airport and the M25. Gatwick airport itself is just 5km south of the village, providing both jobs and international connections.

The land between Salford station and the M23 provides roughly 750 to 1,500 developable hectares. At a gentle density of 50 homes per hectare, this is enough for between 37,500 to 75,000 new homes.

Greater Oxford

Oxford has been a centre for learning and invention for nearly a millennium. From the mass production of penicillin to the Oxford-AstraZeneca Covid-19 vaccine, the city has been a leader in biomedical advancements which have saved millions of lives around the world. Yet a lack of homes and laboratory space mean that Oxford, like Cambridge, is constrained in its ability to attract the world's brightest talents and conduct advanced research.

Oxford has the third worst housing crisis among the UK's 50 largest cities, pricing many early career researchers and working people from the productive jobs that the city has. The city has almost no available laboratory spaces for rent, threatening Britain's ability to capitalise on its world-leading life sciences sector and forcing firms to move abroad.

While Oxford used to have an extensive tramway running along the wide streets in the centre of the city, now its roads are heavily congested. Travel around the city is reliant solely on buses or convoluted routes for cars. Every city in France over 150,000 people has a tramway, Oxford (population 165,000) should be no different.

Countries across the globe are desperate to have world-leading universities like Oxford and Cambridge, yet Britain has them and fails to let their cities grow to maximise the benefits. A Greater Oxford is essential to accelerating scientific and technological advancement through expanded laboratory space, while providing the homes for the researchers and workers who will build this future.

There are several growth areas around Oxford that can accommodate these new homes and laboratory spaces. These broadly fit within an arc from Oxford's north around its western edge and then along the railway line to the south of the city.

Oxford Parkway station opened in 2015 and is just six minutes from central Oxford. Yet it is surrounded by a large surface parking lot, a golf course, and some fields. There are plans to build up to 800 homes nearby on 46 hectares of land, but at just 17 homes per hectare this development will fail to deliver as many homes as a gentle density approach on the same amount of land. Even taking into account this planned development, there are still 100-200 hectares of land that is within an easy walk of the station, which would be best used to build part of an Oxford urban extension.

Plans for a station at Begbroke to Oxford's north have been proposed for the better part of a decade by Network Rail and Cherwell District Council. A station here would provide easy access to Oxford's centre while also providing the opportunity to build new homes through an expansion of Kidlington.

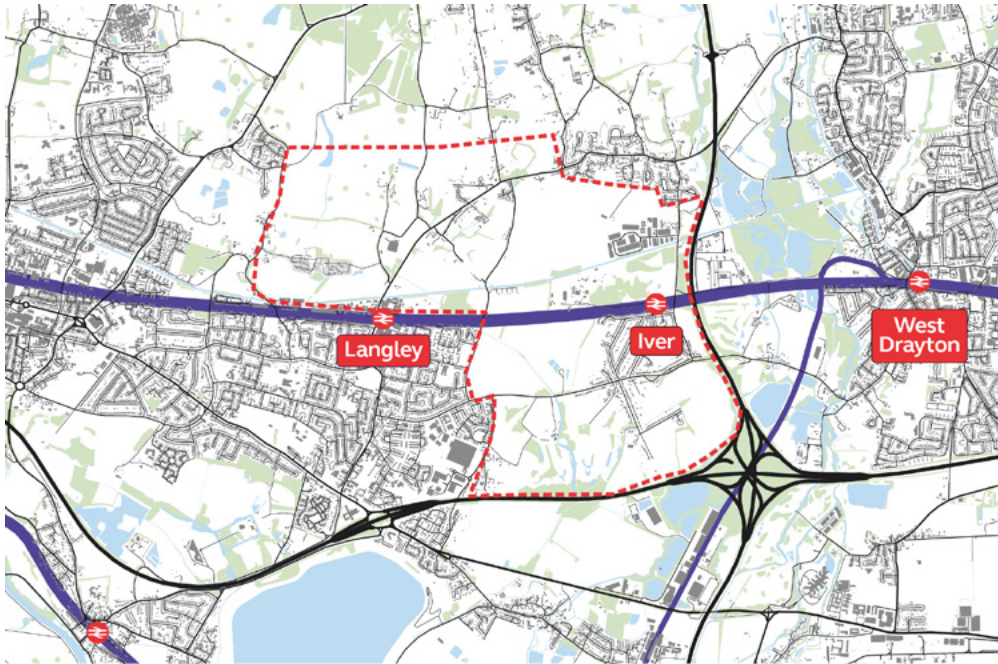
The best opportunity to directly extend Oxford is along the western side of the city. Although there are constraints around Sites of Special Scientific Interest and flood plains, there is still significant land to build the new homes and laboratory spaces that Oxford desperately needs. The area south of Botley towards South Hinksey is the most promising due to its proximity to the city centre and to the ring road. The development could help fund a tramway for Oxford, relieving pressure on the congested roads into the city centre.

Finally, new development should also be considered south along the railway out of Oxford at Culham. Culham Science Centre is a world-leading cluster for fusion energy research and development built next to Culham railway station. By improving the rail links between Didcot and central Oxford from the existing hourly service, there is large potential to unlock the land surrounding the station and near the science centre for new homes and communities.

Iver, Buckinghamshire

The Elizabeth Line has been a massive success and is the UK's busiest railway; already one in every six national rail journeys is on the line. Yet there are several stations on the western end of the route which have significant land adjacent to them that could be developed into well-connected new towns.

Iver and its neighbouring station, Langley, are just half an hour from central London. Yet instead of being surrounded by homes that allow people to make the most of this fantastic link, they are bordered by low density industrial land and fields. With the significant investment of £19bn that has gone into the Elizabeth Line, we should want people to be able to live close to its stations.



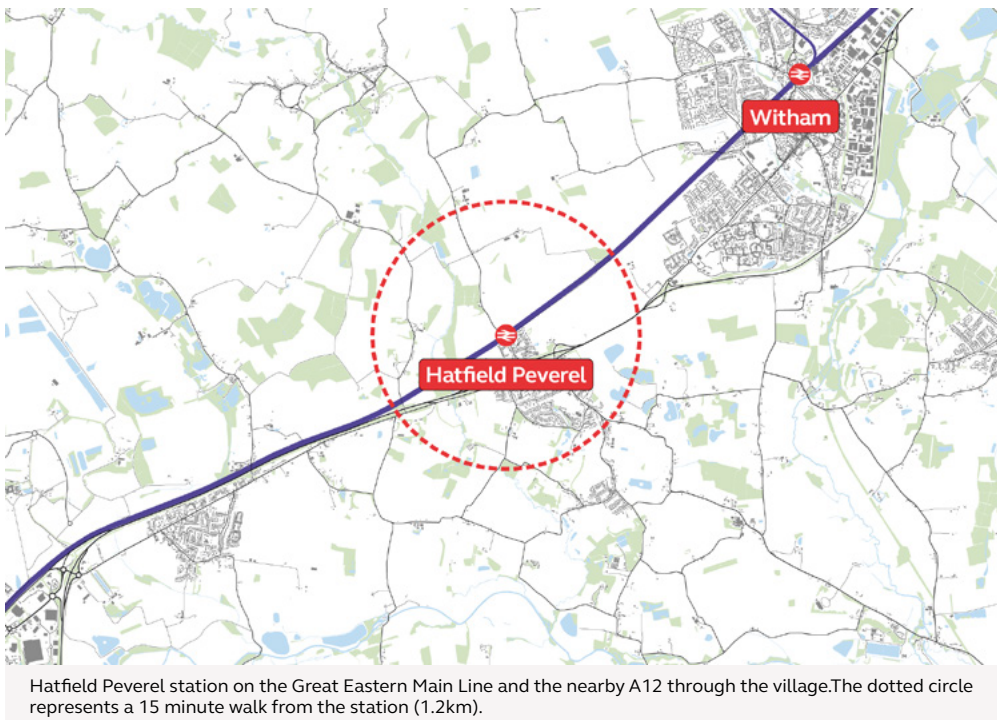
There are approximately 400-600 hectares of land on the north side and part of the south side of the tracks that could be developed into a new town. At a gentle density of 50 homes per hectare, that would be sufficient land for 20,000-30,000 new homes with fantastic access to all the amenities and well-paying jobs that London has to offer.

The area also benefits from its proximity to the M25, M4, and Heathrow Airport. It would be especially suitable if the Heathrow Western Rail Link goes ahead, which would provide non-stop access to the airport from Langley station.

Hatfield Peverel, Essex

The Elizabeth Line opening has increased capacity at Liverpool Street Station as services from Shenfield no longer terminate at the station and instead go through central London. With a few infrastructure upgrades, such as remodelling Bow Junction and adding passing loops on the line between Chelmsford and Colchester, additional stopping services could be added on the Great Eastern Main Line (GEML). This extra capacity could be used to provide more services to Hatfield Peverel, the best location for a new town in Essex.

Hatfield Peverel is less than 45 minutes from Liverpool Street and the station itself is completely to the north of the village. On the other side of the tracks, within walking distance of the station, there is non-green belt agricultural land, providing ample opportunity to build a new gentle density community. There are approximately 300-500 hectares of developable land within easy access to the station. This is enough for 15,000-25,000 homes.



Hatfield Peverel is also well-connected to the strategic road network. The A12 runs through the village, one of the busiest roads in the east of England, providing the main link between Ipswich, Colchester, Chelmsford and London. A plan to upgrade the road was given planning permission earlier this year after submitting 58,000 pages of paperwork and overcoming a judicial review. Yet this scheme, like many other road and rail projects, is going through a review as part of the forthcoming infrastructure plan. The demand that the new town generates and added funding that could come from the land value uplift from the new homes could help make the road upgrade viable, improving the lives of motorists across the East of England.

While Hatfield Peverel provides the best combination of proximity to London and size of developable area, there are similar opportunities to build new towns along the GEML at Marks Tey, Kelvedon, and Ingatestone. The latter could even be served by a short extension of the Elizabeth line considering its proximity to the current terminus of Shenfield.

Bristol Extension

Bristol has Britain's worst housing crisis outside of the greater south east of England. The median home in Bristol now costs around 10 times the median income, which means Bristol's homes are the least affordable of any of Britain's large regional cities. This housing crisis is in part caused by one of the most restrictive green belts in the UK. The green belt is 4.5 times larger than Bristol itself and it is less

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than two miles from Bristol Temple Meads station to green belt land in multiple directions, effectively choking off Bristol's potential.

There are several options to expand Bristol that should be considered alongside any densification plans.

There are plans to build an urban extension to Bristol's north east near the village of Pucklechurch alongside an extension at Lyde Green, which has just finished construction. This area is well-connected to Bristol's roads, being near the M4 and A4174 orbital road, and with the option of a new motorway junction. Yet it is not well-connected to transit. Building an extension to Bristol could fund a long-desired tram in Bristol. Assuming 50,000 homes are built across the Bristol urban area and construction costs are £90,000 less than sale price as they are now, up to £4.5bn of surplus value could be unlocked. Just 20 per cent of this would be enough to give Bristol a 21 mile tram network if construction costs were brought down to the European average.

Pilning Station is among the least used 1 per cent of stations, with only 338 passengers getting on or off a train there last year. The station itself is less than 20 minutes from Bristol Temple Meads and development around the station would encourage a more regular service than the very limited two trains per week parliamentary service that exists now. While a lot of the land around the station is flood plain, the severity of Bristol's housing crisis could enable funding of flood defences for a development surrounding the station.

Plans to undo the Beeching cut and reopen the railway line to Portishead from Bristol has received planning permission. Despite only needing to rebuild 3.3 miles of track, the planning application was 79,187 pages (or 14.6 miles if printed out and laid end to end). Now the line is awaiting judgement as part of the infrastructure review launched after the scrapping of the Restoring Your Railway programme. Without funding, which could be provided from the uplift of homebuilding, the line will be scraped. There are approximately 150-200 hectares of developable land near the potentially restored railway that could be developed to help fund the project and relieve Bristol's housing crisis.

Chippenham, Wiltshire

Historically a small market town built around a crossing point of the River Avon, Chippenham is conveniently located on the main line between London and Bristol Temple Meads. The town grew significantly in the post-war period which saw an increasing number of large developments expand into the surrounding countryside, supported by a network of A-Roads and roundabouts. The town has long been earmarked for expansion, but continuing this pattern of unsustainable sprawl is neither desirable nor viable. A previous plan, dependent on public funding of at least £75 million for a new distributor road, would have delivered up to 7,500 homes. This was cut back to 4,500, before being scrapped entirely in the face of local opposition.

Create Streets, working alongside Sustrans, have developed an alternative proposal for expansion using a 'vision-led' approach to transport and planning, investing in quality of place and a suite of sustainable transport solutions, rather than solely relying on unsustainable and expensive road infrastructure. The aim would be to create a contiguous urban extension, rather than a series of car dependent housing developments hung off the ring road, resulting in happier, healthier, more productive and sustainable places. The resulting 'gentle density' plan is for a walkable, well-connected and integrated town extension with good air quality, less congestion and vibrant neighbourhoods. The plan shows how the same number of homes can be delivered as the sprawling road-led scheme, within the same budget, and with far less land take.

Our Top Twelve Suggested New Towns



A proposal Chippenham, extending the town to the east. Compared to the previous site allocations, the denser masterplan reduces land take from 350 hectares to 120.

Under this 'gentle density' plan, Chippenham would extend organically out to the east of the town centre, providing up to 10,000 new homes. Residents would be able to walk 20 minutes to reach the train station and high street, which is far closer than the previous proposed expansion to the south. Schools, nurseries and convenience shops will be nestled within the new development, while terraced homes and mansion blocks will provide more homes close to its centre.

The £75 million that was allocated for road infrastructure would instead be invested in a range of interventions to help improve the quality of place, tackle pollution and keep people moving. These include increasing the frequency of the north south TransWilts line connecting Melksham, Swindon and Trowbridge. Services would increase to at least one train per hour from the current one train every two hours, thanks to the delivery of a new passing loop to the south of the town for a modest investment of £15 million. A new service to Oxford is currently being trialled at the weekends, and this could be made permanent if new development justifies it. Together, these improvements would make commuting by rail a viable and attractive alternative to driving. Segregated and shared cycle lanes throughout will allow new and existing residents to safely make their way to school, the shops or to simply see friends on the other side of town. For those unable to cycle, Chippenham's 2016 public transport strategy will be funded to provide a high-quality bus service within the town.

These improvements would benefit both future and existing residents of the town, encouraging a move from car dependency to reliance on a wider range of transport options. Investment would also be directed to the historic town centre to improve the local high street, historic buildings and the public realm, to pull people back into the town centre and help it thrive.

Overall, a vision led approach to planning combined with a 'gentle density' approach to design and placemaking, will result in more homes on less land and support happier, healthier and more prosperous towns.



An impression of the alternative gentle density masterplan, featuring a walkable centre and segregated cycle paths

York

Since Roman times, York has been defended, and defined, by walls. Yet it is no longer the mediaeval walls that constrain how York can grow, but York's green belt, which is among the most restrictive in England. You can walk from the Shambles, in the city centre, to the green belt in less than a mile. The centre of York faces challenges between balancing new homes, new student accommodation, places for tourists, and businesses wanting to expand in the highly educated and well-connected city.

As a result of this lack of developable land, homes in York are among the most expensive across the North. The median home here costs £80,000 more than the cost of building, providing a large uplift that can be used for infrastructure improvements and more social housing.

York is surrounded by a ring road that is approximately five miles in diameter. But the city itself does not stretch to meet the ring road. Instead the ring road travels directly through York's green belt. The city should be allowed to extend to its ring road. Given the rising cost of housing in York, which prices many students and workers out, there is clearly demand to live in the beautiful city. The existing York Outer Ring Road improvements, which received planning permission in April, mean that there will be significant new transport capacity in the area.



Greater York - Areas that could be developed at 'gentle density' up to the ring road and a potential satellite at Poppleton.

In France, every city with a population greater than 150,000 has a tram. York has a population of just over 200,000 people but it goes without mass transit. An expansion of York to encompass its ring road would enable the funding of a tramway to make it easier to get in and around the city. A 10 mile tramway system could be funded by just 25 per cent of the surplus value of 20,000 homes if built at the European average cost. The funding could also deliver proposed improvements to the A64 Hopgrove roundabout, increasing access to the countryside and towns to the east.

The city would still remain compact and relatively small, only extending up to three miles from the historic centre. York is a reasonably flat city, so a network of high quality cycle routes could allow most people to cycle into the centre in 15 to 20 minutes. This could easily be funded by capturing just a small proportion of the value uplift from the new housing it would unlock.

Within any York extension plans, there should be a priority to build around Poppleton station. With trains that take only five minutes to access the city centre and the Poppleton Park and Ride along one of the main routes into York, the area is well-connected. Currently, however, the station is in the bottom third of stations by use, because the green belt has limited new homes from being built nearby that could make use of the station's connectivity. The value uplift from the new town could fund the electrification of the Harrogate line that Poppleton is on, providing faster, greener, and more reliable rail service between Leeds, Harrogate, and York.

Situated at the junction between the A59 and the Leeds ring road, Poppleton has good road connections and will partially benefit from the York Outer Ring Road (YORR) scheme. Yet the YORR will not be dualling the stretches nearest Poppleton due to a lack of funding for new bridges over the River Ouse and East Coast Main Line. This is a problem that part of the uplift from the new town could rectify.

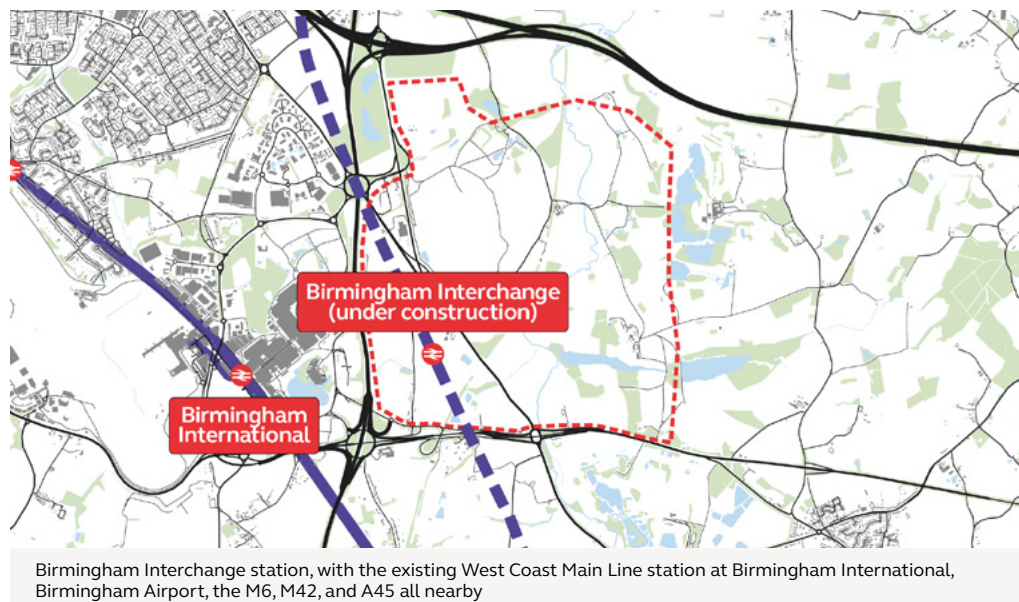
Expanding York to its ring road and building around Poppleton station could provide York with 50,000-75,000 new homes based on developable areas within the ring road at a gross density of 30 to 50 homes per hectare. This will help to boost housing affordability and let more people live near the employment and educational opportunities that the city provides. Plus these new homes could bring trams back to York's streets for the first time in 90 years.

Arden Cross (Birmingham Interchange)

One of the largest infrastructure investments in the UK is currently taking place in a field in the West Midlands green belt. Birmingham Interchange station will be the lynchpin of HS2 services, being the only station outside of London through which all HS2 services must pass.

Currently, a medium-sized development of 3,000 houses is planned next to the station. However, the site will stretch no further than the HS2 station car park. By the simple expedient of crossing a road, a site ten times larger becomes available. This is enough for a genuine town - a community large enough to have its own identity and to contribute to the vitality and character of the West Midlands conurbation.

Even without HS2, the site is remarkably well-connected: it is less than a mile to Birmingham International station, Birmingham airport, a newly upgraded motorway junction on the M42 and the A45, the principal route from Coventry to Birmingham. A Birmingham to Solihull metro extension has been proposed, which will run to the Interchange station, yet it currently lacks funding. A new town here could provide the necessary funds for the extension, which will benefit East Birmingham and Solihull. All that is needed would be an extra stop beyond the Interchange station to run to Arden Cross's centre. This could even be delivered along an existing, disused railway that crosses the site. Action now would allow passive provision for the link without disrupting the operations of HS2.

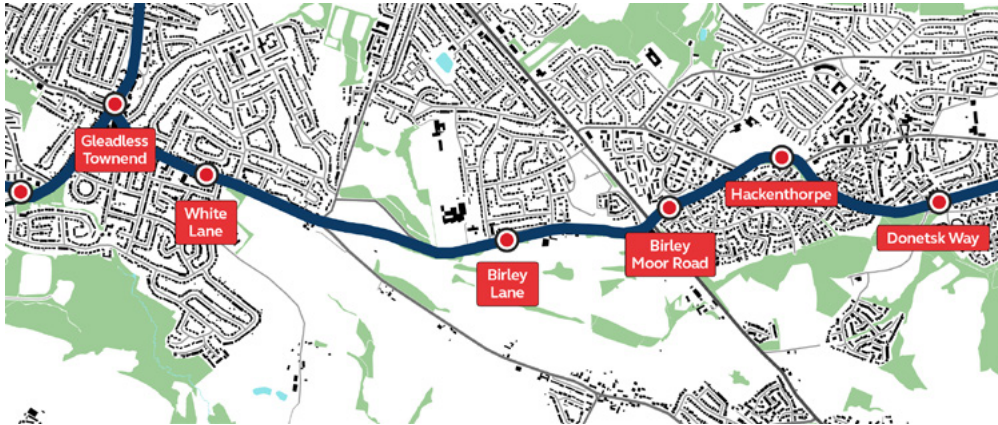


A new community at Arden Cross, next to the HS2 station, can deliver this potential. The attractiveness of the location as a place for office and retail development is extremely high, making it a place that can sustain a strong local economy based on its fundamental advantages.

This site has historically been kept from development by the existence of the Green Belt, and the wish to keep Coventry and Birmingham from becoming a contiguous urban area. This same goal can be achieved by the creation of a large green reserve, while releasing the land that is the best-connected location in the Midlands.

Sheffield Metroland Supertram, South East Sheffield (reserve)

Sheffield is Britain's sixth biggest city. Some neighbourhoods have some of the highest house prices outside the south east. However, it is often overlooked when planning for growth. The Sheffield Supertram has been running since the mid 90's. However, many stations to the south of the city are surrounded by golf courses and fields falling to make the most of this vital, and already existing, service. Creating new, gentle density, communities within walking distance to these stations would deliver thousands of sustainably located homes in a city crying out for more homes and space for advanced manufacturing.



We should not stop here. With some of the value captured from the building of these homes, new tram lines could be built unlocking better, greener, transport for the city and even more new sites for housing and advanced manufacturing.



WHEN: SHOVEL-READY NEW TOWNS

The government has set an ambitious target for delivering 1.5 million homes by 2029. This means that a first wave of new town sites is needed that does not need to wait for time-consuming planning of new large-scale infrastructure before construction can begin.

This paper is built around locations where transport infrastructure is either in place, already under construction, or approved for construction. While some would require further upgrades to realise their full potential, such as building new tram networks, thousands of houses could be delivered now in each of our twelve new town locations with what is already available. The requirements to get going are local elements, GPs surgeries, primary schools and link roads, which are unavoidable in any large-scale development. Further infrastructure upgrades can be delivered alongside the construction of the first homes and can be paid for by the value surplus that each home provides.

Poundbury, Dorset



SOME MYTH-BUSTING.

There isn't enough water.

There is.

And humanity learnt how to tame and channel it at scale thousands of years ago. Middle Eastern kingdoms are able to raise cities in the middle of deserts, so it is implausible to claim that one of the rainiest islands in Europe should stop building houses because water is too scarce. What prevents us building in modern Britain is not water, but process. What has prevented the UK building enough water capacity in the East of England are delays of planning and Ofwat signing off the business case. Any plan to deliver 1.5 million new homes must solve this problem, and will.

There will not be enough power.

There will be.

Britain is undertaking the greatest reworking of its grid ever attempted as the route to delivering the nation's goal of net zero. With or without new housing, this task is essential. As a result, substantial additional capacity is already under construction, and will be delivered in the years ahead. The grid connections necessary to take this where it is needed are also being rolled out with a similar scale of ambition. With the Government pursuing an ambitious energy agenda, power should not be a barrier to housing. As with water, delivery of the specific infrastructure needed to deliver housing at scale on these sites is a function of paperwork, rather than practical difficulties.

There is no space on the trains.

There is space on some. There will be space on others.

The railway is carrying 120 million fewer passengers than pre-covid, services that were suspended during the pandemic have yet to be restored, and the pattern of demand has spread travel away from the historic peak. While this leaves points of continued pressure, overall it represents an unprecedented opportunity to set in motion an ambitious housebuilding programme. In addition, many of the sites in this paper are served by regional lines that have never been pressed for capacity. Others are underwritten by extra capacity (such as East West Rail and the capacity freed up by HS2) that is already being delivered.

New houses mean new roads.

Not these sites.

Housing on this scale does not require the construction of new motorways, only local roads connecting people to the existing network. Any modern place-building should place a priority on travel by foot, bike or public transport, meaning that these sites do not require a Milton Keynes style highway network. This paper's unrelenting focus on creating gentle density places implies compact, walkable communities with the coherence of a traditional town. Many of these sites are chosen because they make use of road upgrades that are already planned or under construction. They therefore require no additional roadbuilding.

We cannot afford to create trams.

We could.

Trams in the UK cost on average two to three times as much per mile to build as in continental Europe. But they do not need to. As we set out in our joint report, Back on Track, we could

reduce our average cost per mile to a European average by properly empowering their creation at scale and by reducing the needless gold-plating of the design and development process.

APPENDIX 1: LONG LIST OF POSSIBLE NEW TOWNS

In addition to the 12 new towns on our shortlist, our spatial analysis, workshops, and desk based research identified a total of 38 additional new town options on our long list. A very short description of each of them is provided within this appendix.

New town	Transport	Nearest city (*if shortage city)	Rationale
Arlesey, Bedfordshire	East Coast Main Line, A1(M)	Cambridge* London*	Potential for a new station along the East Coast Main Line that could provide service into London. It would benefit if Tempsford went ahead.
Atherstone, Warwickshire	West Coast Main Line, A5	Birmingham Watford* London*	Make use of additional West Coast Main Line capacity after HS2 to build a new town with easy access to London and Birmingham
Bayford, Hertfordshire	Hertford Loop, A10	London*	Potential to build around the station, which is on the Hertford Loop and sees services into London Moorgate.
Bicester, Oxfordshire	East West Rail, M40	Oxford* London*	Bicester will be even better connected next year when East West Rail to Milton Keynes opens. An urban extension could bring more people in easy reach of this and Oxford.
Cambourne, Cambridgeshire	East West Rail, A428	Cambridge*	Itself a new town, Cambourne will be served by East West Rail on its outskirts. This provides an opportunity to mirror the town and build an extension on the other side of the railway line.
Crews Hill, London	Hertford Loop, M25	London*	Crews Hill is the least used station in the borough of Enfield and among the 10 least used in Greater London because it is completely surrounded by green belt land. A new town here could take advantage of the regular service to Moorgate and let more people live within walking distance of a reliable railway to central London.
Charlton Riverside, London	North Kent Line, A2, Silvertown tunnel	London*	There is an opportunity to make use of a future regeneration of the dockland area within London to create a gentle density neighbourhood along the River Thames in southeast London.
Chessington South/ Malden Rushett, London	Chessington branch line, M25	London*	Chessington will be served by Crossrail 2 if it goes ahead, but there is land adjacent to the station that is developable plus opportunities to extend the railway to Malden Rushett.
Culham, Oxfordshire	Cherwell Valley Line, A34, A415	Oxford*	Culham is close to Oxford and hosts the Culham Science Park, which is a world-renowned centre of fusion research. The station itself is surrounded by potential developable land to house the scientists building the future. This has been included with our Greater Oxford proposals.
Danzey, Warwickshire	North Warwick-shire line, M40/42	Birmingham	Danzey is within easy reach of Birmingham and has plenty of developable land around the station. Plus house prices are high enough here to make it a viable option for a new town.
Denham Golf Club, Buckinghamshire	Chiltern Main Line, M25	London*	Denham Golf Club station is within the M25 and was built solely to serve the golf course. When house prices in London are so unaffordable and more than 300,000 households are on social housing waiting lists in London, we think there is potential for a new town around this station.
Didcot, Oxfordshire	Great Western Main Line, M25	Oxford* London*	Didcot sits on the Great Western Main Line to London Paddington and the line to Oxford. An urban extension could let more people live in easy access to Oxford, one of our shortage cities.

Appendix 1: Long List Of Possible New Towns

Effingham Junction, Surrey	New Guildford Line, M25	London*	There could be a mirrored town next to Effingham Junction, which sees trains go to London Waterloo. If built large enough this could help fund a potential Crossrail 2 service to the new town.
Epsom, Surrey	Mole Valley Line, M25	London*	There is land south of the race course that could host more homes and will benefit from a potential Crossrail 2 station opening in Epsom if the line goes ahead.
Euston, London	Tube, HS2	London*	Along with the HS2 station, use the neighbouring land to regenerate this area of central London into a new high density mixed use centre.
Fawley Waterside, Hampshire	Fawley Branch Line	Southamp- ton	A new town could help fund the reopening of the Fawley Branch Line, which would provide regular service to Southampton.
Greater Northampton	West Coast Main Line, M1	Watford* London* Birmingham	Expand the well-connected town of Northampton to make use of the extra West Coast Main Line capacity after HS2 is completed. Potential for development in the town's northwest.
Greater Watford	West Coast Main Line, Bakerloo, M25	Watford* London*	Watford is one of our 10 shortage towns and cities. A potential urban expansion could make use of extra West Coast Main Line capacity and potentially fund extending the Bakerloo line to Watford Junction.
Ingatestone, Essex	Great Eastern Main Line, Elizabeth Line, A12	London*	There is potential to mirror the town on the other side of the tracks. Plus the Elizabeth line terminates one stop away at Shenfield, so services could be extended if there was investment from the new town.
Marks Tey, Essex	Great Eastern Main Line, A12, A120	London*	There is plenty of land around this station, which sees trains to London Liverpool Street, and also benefits from forthcoming investment into the A12.
Marston Vale, Bedfordshire	East West Rail, A421	Milton Keynes Cambridge* Oxford*	The area between Bedford and Bletchley will soon benefit from East West Rail, yet there are not many homes along the existing Marston Vale Line. A new town along the line would maximise the benefits of East West Rail's next construction phase.
North Aylesbury, Buckinghamshire	Chiltern Main Line, East West Rail, A41	Oxford* London*	There is potential to expand Aylesbury to reach Aylesbury Vale Parkway station. A potential expansion could also help fund East West Rail to the town.
Oxford Parkway, Oxfordshire	Oxford-Bicester line, A34, A40	Oxford*	The less than a decade old station is surrounded by a car park, a golf course, and fields, when it is only six minutes from Oxford, one of our shortage cities. Building around the station would provide new, accessible homes and boost Oxford's research and innovation potential. This is part of our Greater Oxford proposal.
Pill, North Somerset	Portishead Branch Line, M5	Bristol*	Pill sits on the Portishead Branch Line, which has planning permission to re-open. A development here could help fund the railway line and give residents easy access to Bristol. This is part of our Greater Bristol proposal.
Pilning, Gloucestershire	South Wales Main Line, M4, M5	Bristol*	Pilning station is close to Bristol, one of our shortage cities, but only sees two trains a week because no one lives around the station. A new town here could relieve Bristol's housing crisis while providing transit accessible homes. This forms part of our Greater Bristol plan.
Roade, Northamptonshire	West Coast Main Line, M1	Watford* London*	Roade sits at a branch of the West Coast Main Line, where it splits to go to Northampton or to continue towards Coventry and Birmingham. There is potential to build a new town and station here to take advantage of the extra capacity on the West Coast Main Line after HS2 is completed.
Stoke Harbour, Kent	Elizabeth Line, North Kent Line, M2	London*	Stoke Harbour is a potential new town built on the Hoo peninsula. There is potential to extend the Elizabeth line from its current Abbey Wood terminus through Dartford and Gravesend to this new town built in the Thames Estuary.
Stoke Mandeville, Buckinghamshire	Chiltern Main Line	London*	Potential for development around the station to take advantage of the Chiltern line into London Marylebone.

Appendix 1: Long List Of Possible New Towns

Taplow, Buckinghamshire	Elizabeth Line, M4	Slough* London*	There is land around this Elizabeth line station where more homes could be built within walking distance to make the most of this historic transport investment.
Tring, Hertfordshire	West Coast Main Line, A41	Watford* London*	Tring station sits a mile from the centre of the town. Make use of additional West Coast Main Line capacity after HS2 to build a new town with easy access to London.
Twyford, Berkshire	Elizabeth Line, M4	Slough* London*	Similarly to Taplow, there is land around this Elizabeth line station where more homes could be built within walking distance to make the most of this historic transport investment.
Verney Junction, Buckinghamshire	East West Rail	Oxford*	Despite being 50 miles from London, Verney Junction is the historic terminus of the Metropolitan line. The area will have East West Rail go through it, so a station could be added for the new town if demand was high enough.
Watton at Stone, Hertfordshire	Hertford Loop Line, A1(M)	London*	There is potential to mirror the village across the railway line, which sees regular service into London Moorgate.
Weeton, North Yorkshire	Harrogate Line	Leeds York*	Weeton sits on the railway line between Harrogate and Leeds. There is considerable land adjacent to the station and house prices are high enough to make it a viable new town with easy access to Leeds and York.
West Horndon, Essex	Essex Thameside M25, Lower Thames Crossing	London* Southend*	There is potential to mirror the town on the other side of the tracks, with potential masterplanning currently occurring. West Horndon is very close to the M25 and easily accessible to London Fenchurch Street station.
Wolverton, Milton Keynes	West Coast Main Line, A5	Milton Keynes London*	Make use of additional West Coast Main Line Capacity after HS2 is completed to expand Milton Keynes around the station of Wolverton.
Worcestershire Parkway	Cotswolds Line, Cross Country Line, M5	Birmingham Worcester Cardiff Bristol* London*	This new station opened in 2020. It sits at the intersection of railway lines to Birmingham, Cardiff/Bristol, Worcester, and Oxford/London. This well-connected station is also near the M5 and A44, but currently lacks any homes close to the station.

APPENDIX 2: NOTE ON SANG

Context and background.

A Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace (SANG) is “a recreational site, created to attract residents of new developments away from designated sites that are protected for their valuable ecology and are sensitive to recreational activities such as dog walking such as Special Protection Areas (SPAs) and Special Areas of Conservation (SACs).”

SANGs were evolved to protect the Thames-Basin Heaths SPA ~10 years ago and now the concept is spreading to protect more sites across the country including Mersey SPA, the Epping Forest SAC and the Chilterns Beechwood SAC.

Obviously, there is a need to protect important natural sites. However, as a statement of fact, the need for SANGs to protect SPAs and SACs are currently holding up many hundreds of homes. It is not clear that this is always reasonable or actually based in fact. It is worth considering one example in detail to understand why and how.

The example of the Chiltern Beechwoods SAC.

This is probably the most prominent example of the need for a SANG holding up many hundreds of homes and preventing the pre-approval of 950 homes within the Chesham Neighbourhood Plan. For example, the Chesham neighbourhood Development Order (NDO) for 950 homes is blocked because there is no alternative SANG in the town, and the Town Council cannot fund one. It would need to be in place before development starts. This is despite the fact that the town has unrivalled access to open countryside (it's a destination for walkers) and a great park. Other proposals are also held by requirement for SANG to protect the Chiltern Beechwoods.

There appear to be several key problems with the analysis underpinning the requirement to create SANGS to protect the Chiltern Beechwoods.

How far will people travel?

Firstly, the impact assessment was based on visitor surveys and vehicle counts undertaken between May and August 2021, partly coinciding with the final lockdown period. Is this correct for understanding people's propensity to travel to the Chiltern Beechwoods? Indeed, what is the measurement or underpinning methodology for understanding how far people will travel to recreate in a specific place. It is currently unclear what is correct or legally necessary. What is the 'propensity to recreate'?

- **New homes with car parking versus new homes without car parking.** New homes with low or no levels of parking (for example within Chesham town centre) are being assumed to have the same propensity to drive to the Chiltern Beechwoods as new homes in greenfield sites with more generous parking. This seems perverse.
- **When do visitors affect significant nature?** Different elements of nature are defined as significant in different places. Within the Chilterns Beechwood SAC, Stag Beetles are the crucial species of importance. But these are not affected by visitors unless the visitors remove decaying timber (which seems unlikely).
- **Is it better to change management of natural sites rather than prevent new homes?** The National Trust manages a café and visitor site within the Chiltern Beechwoods. Would it be better to subsidise changes to the management of the site? How might this reasonably improve the effect of visitors on the site?

The underpinning problem.

The scientific and legal requirement that triggers the need for a SANG is unclear and this uncertainty is holding up many homes. Two particular issues are unclear in law:

- **Propensity to recreate.** What is the propensity to recreate in a given area at a certain distance for new homes. How far will people drive to walk their dogs in the woods? How does new homes' access to parking and cars and their location (within towns versus out of town) influence this?
- **Actual impact on natural features of importance.** If new residents do travel to a particular place to recreate, what level of damage (if any) do they cause to natural feature of importance.

Proposed actions.

- **Commission a critical review of the scientific evidence base** that underpins (1) the propensity of residents to recreate in the protected areas; and (2) the actual impact (if any) of recreation on the designated features of interest.
- **Site Management.** Review whether site management would be a more appropriate and proportionate response to risk of impact than the pure reliance on SANGs to divert recreation away. Or some combination of the two.
- **Create SANGs up front.** Can the government forward fund some new SANGs for towns that want to build housing? This must include upgrades to existing spaces. Spending could be largely recovered through developer contributions over time.
- **Brownfield vs greenfield.** Following on from a rapid review, could there be a direction stating that brownfield and infill sites are exempt or partially exempt from SANG contributions, providing that they have low levels of parking and / or have parks and or walking routes nearby. (Assuming that the critical review mentioned above discovers that people are less likely to drive to make use of a SAC if they do not own a car and cannot park by their homes.)

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