Creating quality

Drummond Robson and Gary Young consider current approaches to new settlements in England, focusing on garden villages, suburbs and towns

OPPOSITE:
Patrick Geddes: Cities in Evolution 1915 page 96

RTPI Former logo

Ebenezer Howard's 3 Magnets:
National Education Network (NEN Gallery)





Drummond Robson is LPDF Secretary and Gary Young a partner at Farrells

Settlements have been evolving for at least 6000 years if not longer, but we seem to have learned very little about making good ones. The present crop is so focused on housing that places for the cultural diversity of contented citizens seem long forgotten.

Civilised Quality New Settlements are Places to Live, Work and Enjoy, rather than merely be beautiful places to visit. They must not be the husks of half-forgotten rules and codes but the spirit that embodies them.

True and quality placemaking responds to underlying spatial significance e.g. history, topography, environment, connections, convenience and community in order to make a legible and coherent visual strategy, otherwise the simple question of what happened where and what goes where are not adequately answered. Also the necessary ambition for a new settlement is lost.

Slogans such as urban sprawl, town cramming and brownfield before green are particularly unhelpful, generate contention or hostility and ignore the true qualities of our physical environment which we should be trying to keep and retain. To work they need to combine a balance of physical, economic and social qualities – matters of judgement rather than regulatory control – art not science to combine (as Patrick Geddes said in 1915) the key components of place, work and folk.

New settlements need to respond to their context and evolve, not be imported nor standardised. That means they take time 5-25 years for a new village or town and 40 years for a new city. To be sustainable they need to be connected by sustainable transport, notably rail. Full self-containment is unrealistic in today's world. To be successful they take time to prepare, build evolve and live in.

A particularly promising Result: New type of Settlement: Town and Country United by Sustainable Accessibility (at present rail based) takes from the best of (but doesn't slavishly replicate) Howard's three magnets - and Patrick Geddes more even balance of town and country (in Cities in Evolution Williams and Norgate. Henrietta Street, Covent Garden 1915) See complete book in reproduction at https://archive.org/stream/citiesinevolutio00gedduoft#page/n5/mode/2up

It is ironic the Royal Town Planning Institute now focuses on towns and often poorly understood "placemaking" or even the magisterial "mediation of space" - rather than the proper collaboration of both of town and country –albeit fenced in - as it used to. –even enshrining it in its former logo. (The Town and Country Planning Association at least recognises both in a more balanced way as well as offering recent reports and advice on *New Towns and Garden Cities. (E.g. Best Practice in Urban Extensions and New Settlements A report on emerging good practice* © TCPA. Published March 2007)

In a post Brexit world experimentation and innovation in agriculture can be certain to be result in a changing relationship between town and country, with the absence of CAP subsidies and new innovative practices encouraged by DEFRA such as agriforestry and agricology as well as "opening up the countryside". >>>

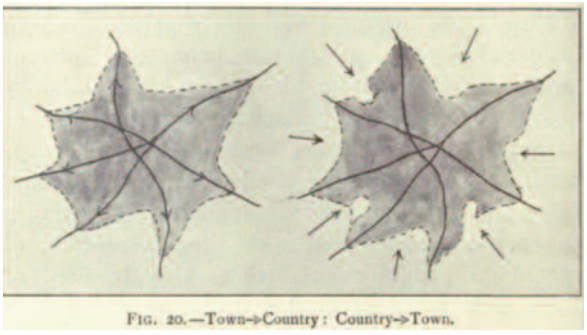
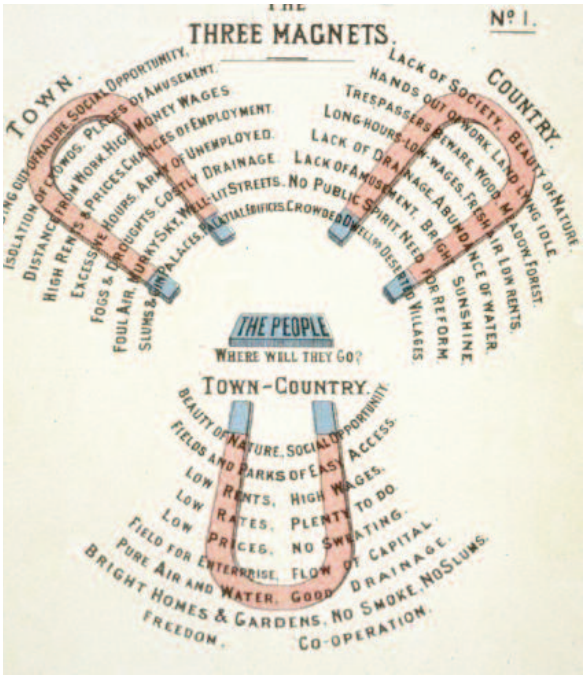
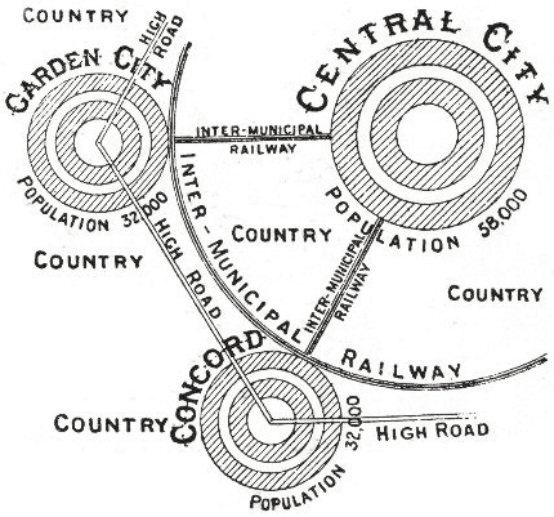


FIG. 20.—Town→Country: Country→Town.









OPPOSITE:
Linked Settlements but Fundamental Unquestioning Division between Town and Country Ebenezer Howard Images derived from *Garden Cities of Tomorrow*:
The first edition's full title was *Tomorrow A Peaceful Path to Real Reform* in October 1898

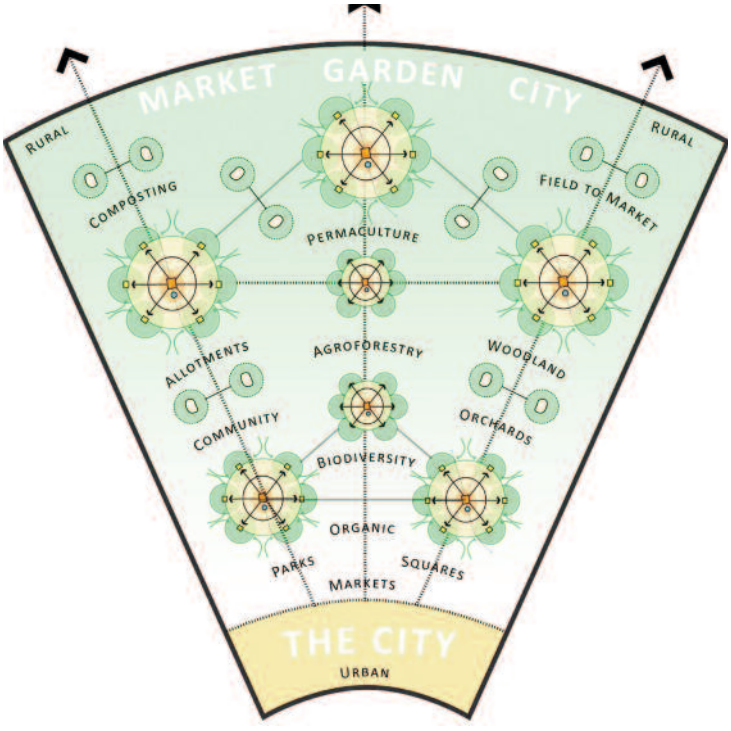
BELOW:
Market Garden City. A concept by Gary Young for settlements planned with local food production and market hubs
Market Hub both © Gary Young and Hannah Smart

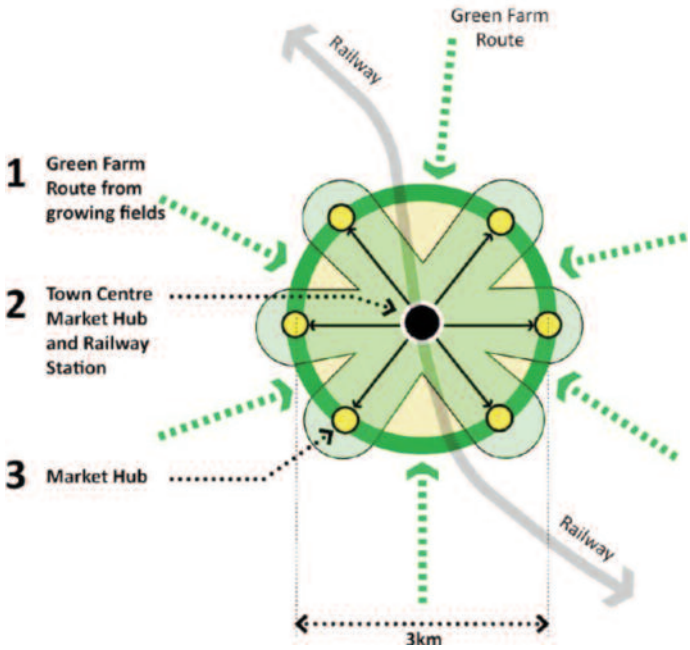
>>> New tensions between maximising agricultural productivity and the environment will need fundamental reviews of countryside policy and concepts of and realistic management of its protection – notably poorly understood terms which become easy placard food such as green belt –be it inaccessible and unsightly or not..

"...both existing cities and the existing countryside had an indissoluble mixture of advantages and disadvantages. The advantages of the city were the opportunities it offered in the format of accessibility to jobs and to urban services of all kinds; the disadvantages could be summed up in the poor resulting natural environment. Conversely the countryside offered an excellent environment but virtually no opportunities of any sort". (*Urban and Regional Planning* – Peter Hall 1974)

Ebenezer Howard proposed that garden cities of 30,000 should be linked by (electric) railways passing through the countryside between the settlements, combining into a social city of 250,000 with all the amenities of a large city plus easy access to the rural environment necessary for healthy living. But when he wrote the UK population was 40M and the inter-war sprawl of towns had not occurred. Today there are no open tracts of land which would accommodate a new city of ¼ million without impacting on its neighbours.

Bringing these ideas up to date allows a more genuine and realistic fusion of town and country: the market garden city where Howard's lunatic asylums, abattoirs and epileptic farms





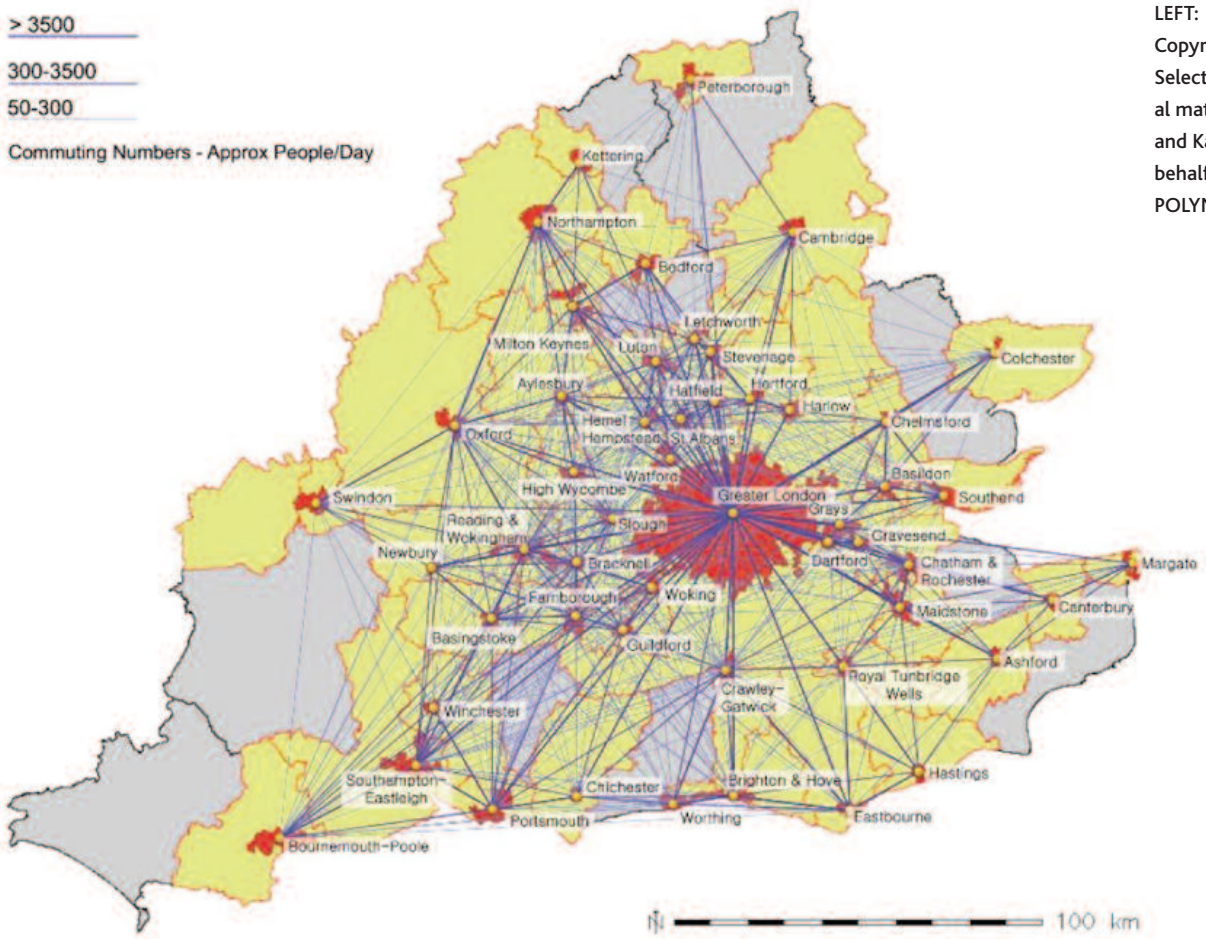


Figure 2.10a South East England MCR: Commuting 2001

LEFT:
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become agroforestry, sustainable biodiversity, agroecology and landscape design.

To be genuinely sustainable they need to be connected by sustainable transport, notably rail. Self-containment is unrealistic in today's world. To be effective needs a regional planning structure rather than sporadic political intervention. It should not be forgotten by those with a fetish about using land that a single standard motorway lane is 2.5 times the width of the standard rail gauge and moves people at much lower capacities. The following table makes similar comparisons of both space and speeds of different modes.

Many of the above examples move on from the following ideas and the present government programme, included for comparison only:

Transport Mode	Speed	Space required per person
Pedestrian		0.8 m^2 per person
Cyclist		3 m^2 per person
Fully Occupied Car		6.2 m^2 per person
Fully Occupied Car		18.7 m^2 per person
Car with 1 person		20 m^2 per person
Car with 1 person		60 m^2 per person
Bus - full and 1/3 full		3.1 m^2 per person (full) 9.4 m^2 per person (1/3 full)
Bus - full and 1/3 full		9.4 m^2 per person (full) 28.1 m^2 per person (1/3 full)
Light Rail/Metro - full and 1/3 full		1.5 m^2 per person (full) 4.6 m^2 per person (1/3 full)
Light Rail/Metro - full and 1/3 full		2.2 m^2 per person (full) 6.9 m^2 per person (1/3 full)

Government Programme

In an expansion of the existing garden towns programme, these smaller projects of between 1,500 and 10,000 homes continue the government's commitment to support locally-led development and make sure this is a country that works for everyone.

The 14 new garden villages announced in 2017 – from Devon to Derbyshire, Cornwall to Cumbria – will have access to a £6 million fund over the next two financial years to support the delivery of these new projects. These developments will be distinct new places with their own community facilities, rather than extensions to existing urban areas. The 14 new garden villages

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RIGHT:
What is a garden city and where are garden villages and towns being built and why
https://www.thesun.co.uk/news/2517967/garden-villages-towns-what-where-why/

are:
Long Marston in Stratford-on-Avon
Oxfordshire Cotswold in West Oxfordshire
Deenethorpe in East Northants near Corby (Tresham Garden Village)
Culm in Mid Devon
Welborne near Fareham in Hampshire
West Carclaze in Cornwall
Dunton Hills near Brentwood, Essex
Spitalgate Heath in South Kesteven, Lincolnshire
Halsnead in Knowsley, Merseyside
Longcross in Runnymede and Surrey Heath
Bailrigg in Lancaster
Infinity Garden Village in South Derbyshire and Derby City area
St Cuthberts near Carlisle City, Cumbria
North Cheshire in Cheshire East
The 3 new garden towns are:
Aylesbury, Buckinghamshire
Taunton, Somerset
Harlow & Gilston, Essex and Hertfordshire

Central government direction, though based it is said on public support, lacks any regional framework to provide the sustainable virtues of connectivity which could benefit from a

FAR RIGHT:
Poundbury
and BELOW:
Bicester, Ebbsfleet and Otterpool Garden towns









LEFT AND BELOW:
Bicester Garden Town extension of 13,000 homes 2014 masterplan © Farrells

Otterpool Park Garden Town of 10,000 homes. 2018 masterplan © Farrells & Arcadis

more transparent recognition of the rail network in the interests of economic efficiency but also access to social cohesion and physical diversity and variety of the Howard model.

As reported in *The Daily Mail*, the Government is backing 17 locations, with a £6 million fund to support the 14 new garden villages and an additional £1.4 million for three new garden

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towns in Aylesbury, Taunton and Harlow & Gilston. Government announced 3 Garden Towns during 2015- 2016,

Bicester in Oxfordshire, Ebbsfleet in Kent, Otterpool Park in Folkestone and Hythe DC, Kent. The idea is that these will produce pleasant, sustainable places to live, backed by the infrastructure that is needed.

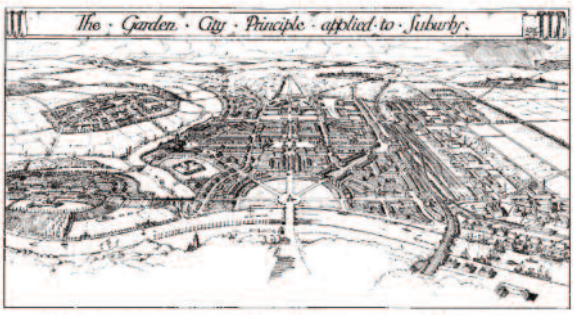
The development is built to a traditional high-density urban pattern, rather than a suburban one, focused on creating an integrated community of shops, businesses, and private and social housing. There is no zoning. The planners say they are designing the development around people rather than the car, and they aim to provide a high-quality environment, from the architecture to the selection of materials, to the signposts, and the landscaping.

To avoid constant construction, utilities are buried in common utility ducts under the town. Common areas are maintained by a management company to which all residents belong. It consists of 40 per cent social housing and is designed for sustainable development, which includes being carbon neutral.

And see Gilston Area Concept Framework Consultation https://www.eastherts.gov.uk/gilston. See also Deenethorpe Northamptonshire (Tresham Garden Village) http://www.tresham-village.uk/our-proposals/

Finally it is worth recalling where this all started on the ground– in Letchworth so the lessons of history are not forgotten:





Mr. Raymond Unwin here illustrates the application of the Garden City principle of a belt of green unfolding the whole community to the extension of new Suburbs. The Suburbs are seen separated from the city by belts of land, which will remain open for all time.

COLOURED MAP RIGHT BELOW:
The actual early evolutionary stages of garden city creation at Letchworth: infrastructure before town centre



CITIES, SUBURBS, AND VILLAGES.

In view of the many distorted ideas of what a Garden City is and the confusion which has resulted between Garden Cities, Garden Suburbs, and Garden Villages, it may be well to quote a succinct definition of the three phrases :—

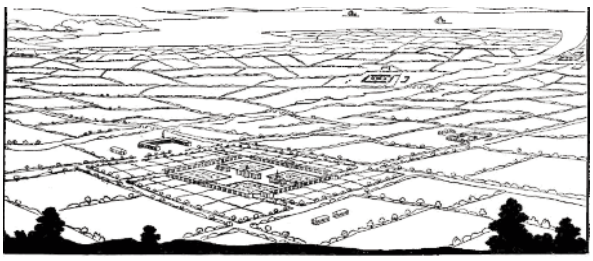
A "Garden City" is a self-contained town, industrial, agricultural, residential—planned as a whole—and occupying land sufficient to provide garden-surrounded homes for at least 30,000 persons, as well as a wide belt of open fields. It combines the advantages of town and country, and prepares the way for a national movement, stemming the tide of the population now leaving the countryside and sweeping into our overcrowded cities.

A "Garden Suburb" provides that the normal growth of existing cities shall be on healthy lines; and, when such cities are not already too large, such suburbs are most useful, and even in the case of overgrown London they may be, though on the other hand they tend to drive the country yet further afield, and do not deal with the root evil—rural depopulation.

"Garden Villages," such as Bournville and Port Sunlight, are Garden Cities in miniature, but depend upon some neighbouring city for water, light and drainage; they have not the valuable provision of a protective belt, and are usually the centre of one great industry only.

The Garden City therefore stands as the preventive, not as the palliative.

There is general agreement that the housing of the people and the evil environment of that housing are very potent factors of our social maladies. The aggregation of population is in itself an evil. Wherever more than a certain number of people are housed on a given area of land, no matter whether they be in the best of "model dwellings," there the vital statistics show the progress of the evil.



Robert Owen's scheme for a model town "Harmony," from his own description published in 1817.