

CATHEDRAL CITIES IN PERIL

18 March 2015

Foster + Partners

with input from English Heritage
and Terence O'Rourke MBE

INTRODUCTION

This report has been prepared to help inform the debate about the expansion of our cathedral cities and historic towns, mainly prompted by the need to significantly increase housing stock. It is the result of reflections and debates held by Foster + Partners, English Heritage and Terence O'Rourke MBE, which took place in the context set by the Kenwood House Group. The group was established and chaired by the Earl of March. It consists of leading figures from a wide variety of backgrounds, all influential in their fields, and all with a keen interest in the future of our historic cities and towns. The purpose of its meetings has been to consider the key issues and threats facing Britain's special towns and cities, and to discuss how best to protect them, whilst making them fit for the 21st century.

In preparing this report we are aware of the challenges of our times and the need to provide good quality housing in thriving communities for a fast-growing population. Above all, we recognise that English historic cities and towns are very attractive places in which to live and work, and it is in their best interest to capitalise on their unique assets. This is exactly why their custodians, local councils, should encourage and accommodate appropriate and high-quality urban growth, whilst working in harmony and balance with all of those elements that together make them special.

We strongly believe that historic cities are able to successfully reconcile heritage and growth. Our initial study consisted of carrying out a number of case studies of British historic cities, and contrasting these with analysis of a number of continental European examples. From this we were able to draw out the different approaches to conservation and development in sensitive locations, and to identify some of the lessons to be learnt. To evaluate our conclusions, we carried out, with the cooperation of the local authority, a more detailed study of King's Lynn to see how our conclusions might work in practice. From this study, we have been able to draw up a set of recommendations. These record what we believe should be done so that historic cities can build upon their qualities to achieve better growth without damage to their intrinsic and unique assets.

“Nothing changes more than
a protected building.”

I.R., Delft Monumentenzorg (Delft Heritage Agency)
Interviewed by Foster + Partners on 21 August 2014

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Our smaller cathedral cities and historic towns are in danger of losing their character and beauty.

Often thriving as communities, and certainly one of the glories of English life, the demands of urban expansion to meet growing housing targets are threatening their much admired intrinsic value.

However, our studies have shown that there are solutions which could both ensure housing delivery and also maintain, and even rejuvenate, the qualities of these precious towns. These solutions do not need a fundamental change to current legislation, rather a shift of emphasis and change of attitude.

We started by studying four typical cathedral cities: Durham, Ely, Chichester and Lichfield. These studies revealed that:

- the quantity of housing set by local authorities can be too much, exceeding population projections for the sake of expected economic returns. This leads to unnecessary greenfield development destroying the open setting and demanding extensive infrastructural delivery.
- the size of single sites can be too large in relation to the existing town and, if released without a clear planning vision, they tend to be monolithic and out of character with the urban fabric.
- an overly restrictive approach and lack of alternatives for sensible site allocations may result in failure to meet housing demands.
- whilst encouraging the development of brownfield sites, lack of vision from the local council on the future of a site leads to lack of action.

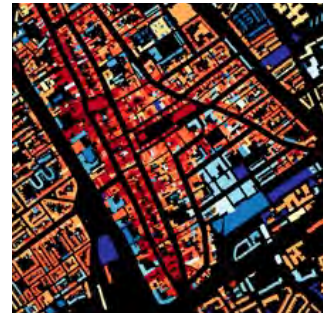
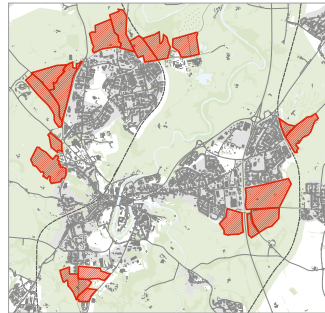
We also looked at four historic cities in Europe - Delft, Lund, Tübingen and Bayonne - from which we learnt that:

- the old and new should be mixed: by developing inner city, smaller sites for housing, the city centre will be rejuvenated, heritage will be reused and general design standards will rise.
- community-led development models should be encouraged so that local character is kept and expansion grows from within the town rather than being imposed.
- when brown field sites are exhausted, carefully considered mixed use areas of growth with distinctive and appealing features should be developed and linked to public transport corridors.
- new interventions should be planned to enhance the historic fabric, leading to a better quality of life in historic centres and avoiding deathly museumification.

We then wanted to test our observations.

We selected King's Lynn in Norfolk, a town in the process of producing their planning framework to respond to housing demands. We shared our evolving ideas with the local Borough Council Kings Lynn and West Norfolk and English Heritage.

First we identified city centre sites suitable for infill housing, which could provide about one third of local demand. We then proposed building a mixed-use neighbourhood integrated with the existing large-scale retail park, with links reinforced to the historic centre. Finally, we proposed to densify and introduce new uses in the existing residential expansions closer to the centre. The combination of such developments if accepted in full has the potential to make a major contribution to satisfying the current demand for housing diverting the development from greenfield sites.



Our recommendations are:

- **revitalising inner cities:**
premium new homes bonus for regeneration and infill; windfall plots as part of housing delivery numbers; compulsory purchase powers as tool of inner-city renovation; constructive conservation as rule for heritage areas; design quality and scale at the core of planning applications.
- **integrating old and new:**
greater control of land value changes; greater masterplanning powers and skills in local councils; urban development agencies managing housing delivery; requirement for new proposals to meet the vision of this agency.
- **connecting fragmented areas:**
flexibility in land use to encourage mixed use and financial incentives for complying developers; directing central government funding streams; relating development density thresholds to public transport viability.
- **distinctive neighbourhoods:**
frameworks allowing flexibility in site allocations and housing models; local institutions as anchors for experimenting and securing community support; competitive process of urban development visions as rule; encouraging variety of housing choices; government funding of pilot projects.
- **community-led models:**
local councils as surveyors of opportunities and moderators of collaborative schemes; working with self-build approaches; enhancing access to land and money by community-led schemes; exploring potential of Local Development Orders for brownfield areas
- **tangible returns of growth:**
ability to negotiate and direct planning obligations for explicit community aims; using financial return to support brownfield regeneration; clear and stricter planning obligations system.



THE CONTEXT

1

Historic towns and cities in England need to find ways to preserve their unique heritage while helping to deal with considerable national population growth. Divided between the desire to protect and the need to expand, they should combine the objective demand for new homes with the conservation of their historic environment.

Earlier research has highlighted ways to preserve heritage in spite of growth, but we believe that new insights can be gained by considering how historic cities can achieve better growth because of heritage. The challenges faced by these cities – considerable expansion plans, achieving city centre regeneration, ensuring the quality of urban extensions, meeting housing demand – stress that the key problem lies in harnessing growth to enhance historic towns and cities without losing their intrinsic qualities.



THE POPULATION IS GROWING, CONSTRUCTION RATES ARE DROPPING: ENGLAND IS NOT MEETING ITS HOUSING TARGETS

Population growth and housing shortage in England

In recent years, a large amount of studies, articles and official statistics have argued that England is not meeting its housing needs. Significant population growth is estimated for the next two decades and housing completions seem to be far from responding to the expected demand. Naturally, the housing shortage problem is multifaceted – builders, owners, planners and bankers play a role and usually do not work in an articulate way (Hall, 2014). But, most importantly, the problem goes beyond a simple quantitative provision of housing – not only must we provide the right amount of houses, we must also plan them at the right places, schedule them at the right pace, build them with the right quality standards and make sure that people can afford them.

Not all places in England face the same population pressures nor do they all suffer from housing shortage. The regional breakdown of population data shows that the South has higher estimates of over 20% growth to 2031, while regions in the North follow more modest projections between 12% and 16%. With 32.6% more households estimated for 2031, London is the inevitable exception (TCPA, 2013).

However, housing completions do not follow these smooth regional trends. The 2013 completion rates and their comparison to the previous year (DCLG, 2014) show a more mixed and fragmented pattern of production rhythms, increases and decreases – notably, increases in the less pressured Northern regions, and a visible slowdown in some Southern regions including London – suggesting that more factors, other than population estimates, contribute to the relation between supply and demand in different settings.

Combined with the freedom of approach allowed by the National Planning Policy Framework (2012), this gives local authorities scope to define very different housing targets even if departing from similar official population estimates. Growth targets are a tool of political and economic strategy rather than a simple demographic derivation, and the mismatch between official numbers and local objectives is one of the sources of disagreement between planning authorities and the local public opinion.

An additional problem is the great contrast in housing affordability which, unsurprisingly, highlights the so-called North-South divide and clearly shows pockets of unaffordability in London and the South East. These are the regions with more expensive housing today and where the strongest price increases are expected for the next five years.

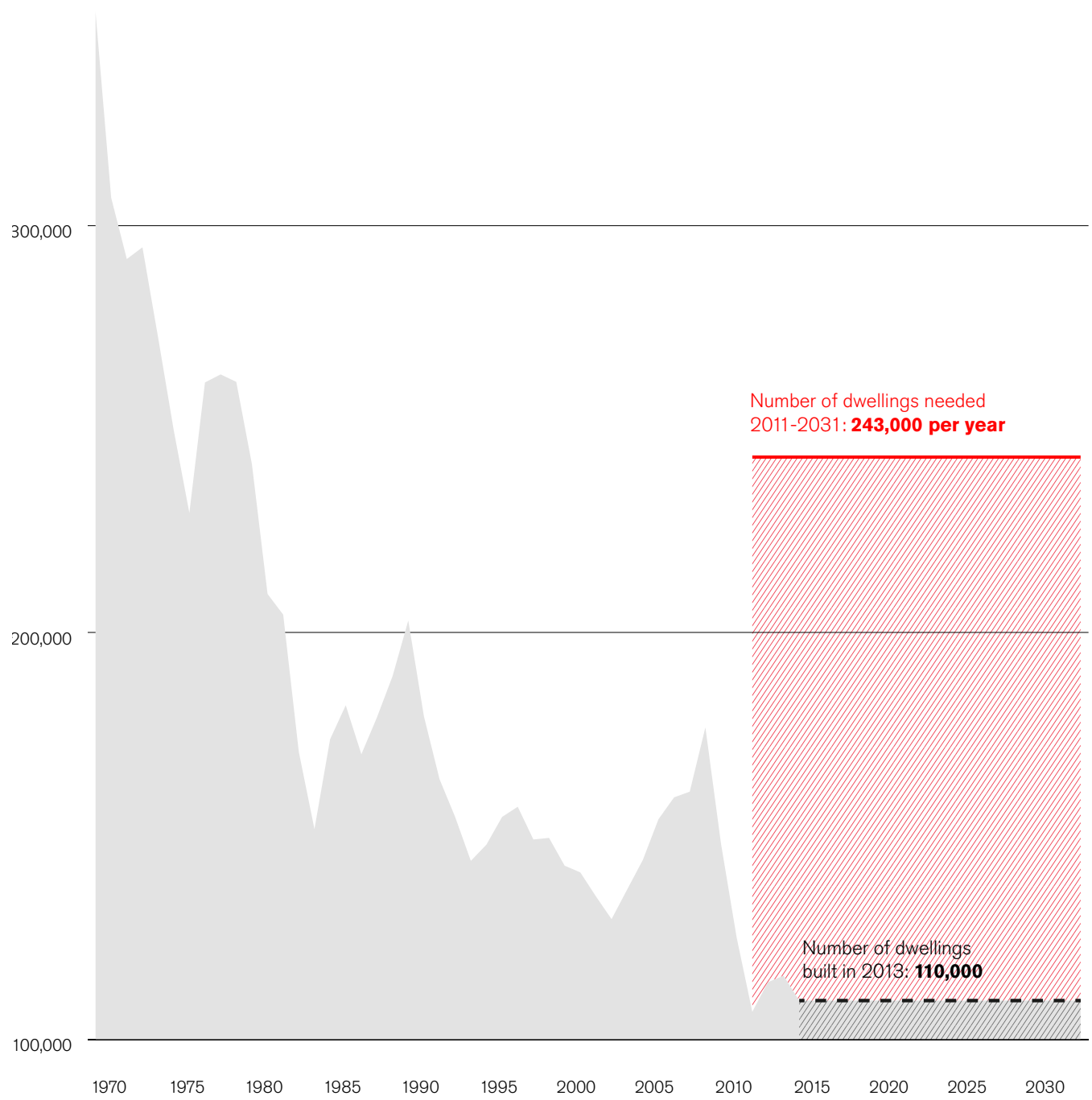
This mismatch between provision and demand, along with the priorities driving the developers' decisions of where and when to build and the changing lifestyle preferences of households lead to contrasts in English cities between vacant and derelict town centres and sprawling, anonymous extensions occupying large tracts of land. While there are about 635,000 empty homes in England, both short and long-term (Empty Homes Statistics 2013), the amount of urban and developed land between 2000 and 2010 has grown by 5.4% (Khan et al., 2013). Of course, there are many exceptions to this trend and in cities like London, Bristol or Manchester we can find countless examples of old and dense inner city areas being regenerated into vibrant new neighbourhoods – the challenge is how to transfer those practices to other places where sluggish city centres and increasing sprawl is still the rule.



Additional 5.4% of land developed between 2000-2010, Khan et al., 2013



635,127 empty homes in England in 2013, Empty Homes Statistics 2013



ONS Table 244 House building: Permanent dwellings completed (2014), and TCPA, New estimates of housing demand and need in England, 2011 to 2031 (2013)

ENGLAND'S HISTORIC CITIES ARE UNDER PRESSURE TO DELIVER NEW HOMES

Pressures and prospects in English historic cities

Population growth estimates and the threat of housing shortages led to a growing acceptance of the inevitability to build more in most English cities, which comes with an apparently contradictory desire to protect the character and scale of existing cities along with their heritage. This is especially relevant in English historic cities and conflicts emerge not only in discussions about regeneration of existing areas but also about plans to expand on greenfield land. Historic cities clearly express this tension in the way their local authorities and public opinion interpret urban growth and heritage. Here, the spectrum varies from growth seen as an opportunity for economic development to a destructive force affecting the city's integrity; and heritage as a nuisance holding back a city or a treasure to preserve untouched at all costs.

The different perceptions of urban growth and heritage protection may be related to the different pressures acting on historic cities. To start, population growth estimates in those cities vary widely: following the regional trends above, cities in the South and in the sphere of the London urban region, such as Ely, St Albans and Rochester, are expecting increases between 18% and 27% until 2032. Northern cities like Durham and Carlisle have more modest projections under 7% (ONS, 2014).

The cities expecting higher population growth also tend to enjoy greater economic prosperity, but this dynamism turns them into the places where house prices have increased the most in recent years. There is a self-reinforcing tendency where more prosperity generates greater attractiveness and negative impacts on affordability.

Interestingly, another consequence of this dynamics is the fact that less prosperous cities tend to define more ambitious expansion targets, despite their lower population pressures, because they interpret expansion as a way to stimulate the local economy. This is visible in cities like Durham, Carlisle and Lichfield, all planning for considerable urban expansion. Conversely, some of the more prosperous cities tend to have more conservative expansion targets, despite their higher population pressures, based on the intention to preserve their current conditions. The case of Chichester, explicitly keeping housing targets below expected needs, illustrates this opposite tendency.



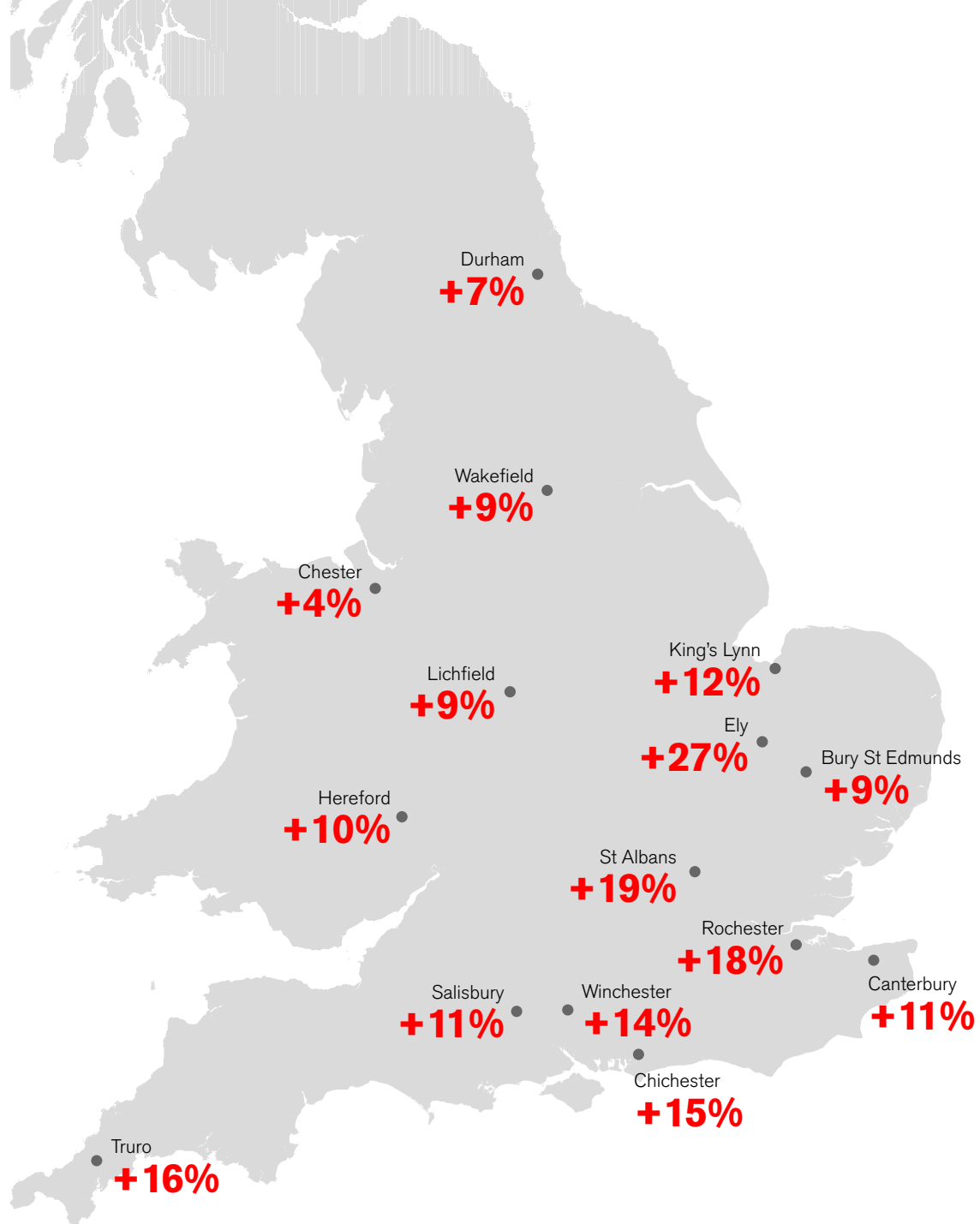
"The possibility of us developing on the green belt is virtually nil. The green belt is sacrosanct."

WMRA chairman, David Smith
Save Lichfield's Green Belt,
www.ourcampaign.org.uk



"Build more houses to big up Carlisle plan, council chiefs urged. [...] Ambitions to increase the size of Carlisle are being ramped up –and hundreds more homes could be built."

The Cumberland News, 15 November 2013



THE NATIONAL PLANNING POLICY FRAMEWORK MAKES LOCAL AUTHORITIES RESPONSIBLE FOR DELIVERING HOMES AND CONSERVING HERITAGE

Opportunity for the discussion about reconciling heritage and growth

Although research on how historic cities should manage growth has been conducted before, three recent developments suggest that the timing is just right for a new discussion about ways to reconcile heritage and growth in English historic cities.

- Recent government statistics show an increase in public support for new housing expansion in and around cities, which is an added reason to manage this expansion creatively and responsibly;
- The National Planning Policy Framework (2012) leaves to local authorities the responsibility to define their own housing targets, based on local evidence, while asking for a 'positive strategy' for the conservation of the historic environment;
- And, in response to their new responsibilities, many local authorities are now developing their Local Plans, meaning that rather than scrutinising past trends, cities are now in between paths and would profit from incorporating best practices.

The need for a positive strategy to creatively approach heritage protection and the inevitability of urban expansion creates a potentially rich setting for a growth strategy that works with rather than against heritage protection. By doing so, historic cities can lead the way to more harmonious growth. We would like to argue against the notion of heritage protection and urban growth as forces operating in opposite directions and look for examples showing that the needs for urban growth can be directed to the renovation and enhancement of the historic environment, and that the demands of heritage protection can raise the standards of development, both in new and existing urban settings. Carefully planned urban growth can help create better historic cities - cities that preserve their unique qualities and provide their growing population with new and exciting places to live, work and play.

However, national and local policies introduce some constraints to alternative approaches to the current planning paradigm of continuous expansion (Rydin, 2013):

- the presumption in favour of development in the NPPF, where market-led 'growth' is the basis for every plan, and the limitation of negotiations of social and environmental benefits to the financial profit ('viability') of development;
- the way that policy influence cascades down from the NPPF, as local plans have to follow its core growth-dependent principles, even if local circumstances suggest otherwise;
- the secondary role of community input, again subject to preserving the viability of development;
- the involvement of developers in actual plan-making, advancing sites already purchased before the plan is finalised, regardless of urban, social, architectural or infrastructural concerns;
- the potential incentive for the community to follow the developer's choices of cheaper sites, as they will result in greater financial net profit to share as compensation;
- the tools available for applicants to appeal to the Planning Inspectorate to override local decisions and obtain planning permission.

Local authorities are now required to deliver homes while conserving heritage. In response, many cities have to draft new Local Plans defining their targets





National Planning Policy Framework



www.communities.gov.uk
community, opportunity, prosperity

AMBITIOUS URBAN EXPANSION TO BOOST THE LOCAL ECONOMY IS PLANNED ON GREEN BELT. COULD THIS BE ACHIEVED BY BROWNFIELD SITES IN THE TOWN?

Some historic cities, especially in the North, are planning considerable expansion as a way to stimulate the local economy

County Durham Council has developed very ambitious growth projections to justify plans for 31,400 new homes in the district by 2030. 5,200 of these would be in the City of Durham, the majority on green belt land. Urban expansion – houses, offices, roads – is conceived as a way to improve the county's economic prospects and the official discourse is about becoming “an economic powerhouse” of the North.

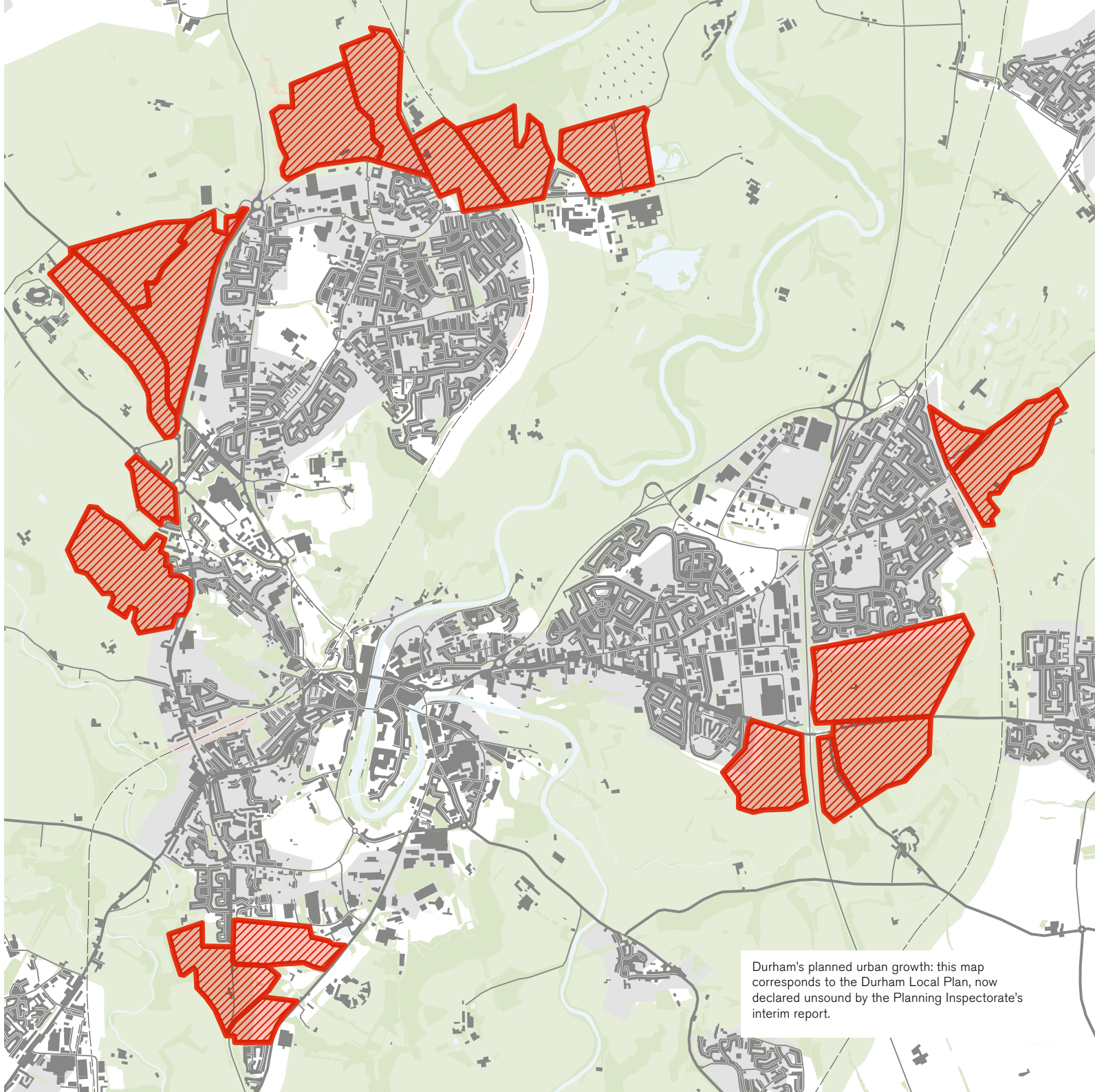
Naturally, this view of urban growth is highly contested. Local groups object to the credibility of the growth estimates and criticise the quantity and location of the development, especially on the green belt. They also envision great dangers to the heritage and urban image of Durham. Expansion at such scale will probably have an impact on the city's scale and character, changing the ways people move around, adding pollution, affecting city views, and exercising extreme pressure on the local services – transport, schools, health centres, etc. – which may not be prepared to cope with the extra demand. According to many views, Durham as a World Heritage site and a compact and recognisable urban space is at risk.

The final outcome of these tensions was the highly critical interim report released by the Planning Inspectorate on the 18th February 2015. This report dismissed the Durham Local Plan as 'unrealistic and flawed', criticising the high employment and housing targets, the excessive urban sprawl over green belt land and the impact of the planned roads. Notably, the inspector adds that the plan is not compatible with the sustainability demands of the National Planning Policy Framework.

Defending massive expansion as a way to improve a city's fortunes is not exclusive to Durham, of course. Other cities are going down that path and opening up large tracts of land for developers and investors, expecting a return in population, jobs and economic attractiveness. The problem there is how to protect not only the extremely sensitive and well-kept heritage sites but also the larger settlement harbouring them, which is an integral part of Durham as a complete urban experience.



Durham's cathedral and compact city centre, surrounded by green fields



Durham's planned urban growth: this map corresponds to the Durham Local Plan, now declared unsound by the Planning Inspectorate's interim report.

SINGLE DEVELOPERS TACKLING VERY LARGE SITES CAN LEAD TO **HOMOGENEOUS AND DISCONNECTED RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT**

Mass-developed large sites detached from existing urban fabric

Large scale, mass-developed urban expansion can be extremely detached from its surroundings, appearing as self-referential and unrelated objects rather than integral parts of a whole. This is not so much about their quality as architectural works, but rather reflects the risks of alienation and detachment from the wider social and material fabric. Developments led by apparently random, short-term decisions from developers rather than a strong local vision, compensations in the form of payments rather than a tangible impact on the surroundings, generic or repetitive functional programmes rather than complementing and diversifying existing functions, all contribute to this alienation and create city areas which are indifferent at best.

Several new expansion projects clearly illustrate this. Some - like in Ely - are about large-scale expansion beyond the city limits and others consist of developments within the existing city, but they are similar in many ways: these expansions tend to be too large, too homogeneous and too detached from the existing urban fabric of historic cities. While some are praised for their urban quality, sustainability and careful relation with the historic buildings on the site, they are often large and complex sites, conceived as a single unit by a single developer and lacking the social and physical variety of the surrounding urban fabric.

The point here is not to compare the outcomes and quality of particular developments but rather to point out the bigger problems underpinning them. Local authorities, developers and homeowners all play a role here. Local authorities release large pieces of land for development as a single unit, which can be bought and developed by a single investor or conglomerate. Naturally, only a handful of investors can afford to buy and manage such large pieces of land, which excludes smaller, community-led organisations.

Furthermore, such areas are very different from the typical scale of the historic urban fabric, where a multitude of small plots with different owners contributed to small-scale differentiation of uses, occupation and architectural designs. This led to the social and physical diversity of historic cities, and the widely varying and surprising urban features that we learned to appreciate.

This type of urban fabric is obviously at risk when the city surrenders the ability to produce a masterplan to the developer, and a single investor mass-develops a huge site through generic planning based on repetitive patterns and self-referential designs. Despite the mixed uses usually mandatory in expansions, excessive homogeneity of the built fabric is inevitable. Such expansion sites are also planned with sales in mind and thereby aimed at narrower markets than those existing in cities that took centuries to grow. Homogeneity in house prices, sizes and tenure helps to reduce the social diversity typical of existing cities. Finally, time schedules for construction are unclear and often led by market opportunities rather than local interests, with developers consistently accused of hoarding land in response to the former instead of building in the interest of the latter.

The role of home owners must also be addressed, as developers work in response to their markets. The new expansions reflect the preference for an 'anti-urban', low density environment, as it were closer to the rural idyll where many people dream of living. But these huge pieces of land covered with green spaces and detached single-family homes, whose sheer quantity is compensated by the developers' promise to "soften its appearance" (Cambridge News, 25 September 2013), do not usually achieve a consistent relation with the existing urban fabric, nor do they promote integration of old and new into a larger and better historic city.



Ely's cathedral and compact historic city centre



North Ely greenfield development site



RESTRICTIVE APPROACH AND LACK OF GROWTH AREAS: UNMATCHED HOUSING DEMAND LEADS TO **CRISIS OF AFFORDABILITY**

Growing cities not meeting their housing needs

The case of Chichester, a relatively prosperous historic city in the South East, is the inversion of the less prosperous Durham in the North. While Durham is planning ambitious expansion that goes well beyond most population projections, Chichester states in its Local Plan that it will objectively not meet its housing demands. Despite some recently proposed modifications (January 2015) increasing in housing provision and promising future revisions when there is greater certainty about new infrastructure, the Local Plan text still states:

"7.7 [...] The existing development pattern comprises small discrete settlements, separated by generally open countryside with long views. Chichester city [...] is a small, historic city of national significance, and protecting the heritage and setting of the city is a key planning consideration. All these factors reduce the opportunities for new housing.

7.10 As a result of [...] the Plan is not able to meet the full, objectively assessed housing needs. The Plan housing target is therefore based on the level of housing that can realistically and sustainably be delivered within the period, [...]."

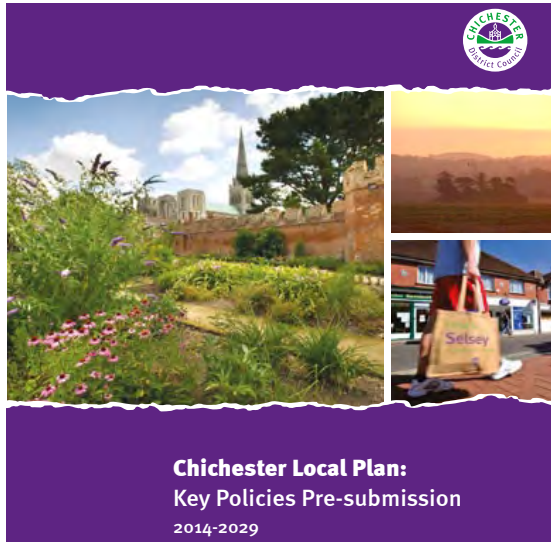
Chichester has a careful approach to urban growth, with a clear intention to protect the city's setting and character. The Local Plan defines strategic growth locations as compact areas on the fringes of the core city, allowing new developments to be tightly connected to the existing fabric and ensuring the necessary transport links. The local council also developed impact studies to assess how much each new growth area will affect the historic city.

However, this has to be taken with other severe constraints on Chichester: the South Downs National Park immediately to the north, flooding issues to the south east and west, traffic congestion issues, an active population opposed to large-scale development, and boundaries between different local authorities with the duty to cooperate, greatly reduce the available alternatives for growth areas.

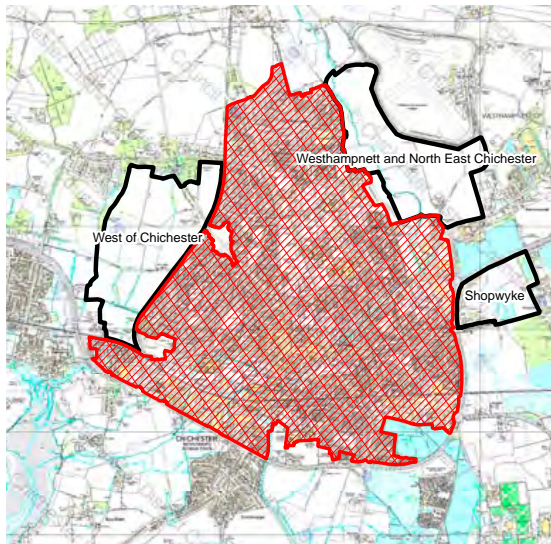
Altogether, this approach is restricting the necessary growth. Chichester is suffering from a chronic housing shortage, in particular affordable housing, and the city now tops the list of least affordable places in the UK, according to recent statistics that weigh in average house prices and local salaries. In order to avoid excessive restrictions on growth and the creation of a chronically underserved and unaffordable city, Chichester needs a more ambitious approach that works with its unique heritage assets through infill, densification and well-managed expansion, but also stresses collaboration with neighbouring authorities to develop cross-boundary growth corridors and sites that result in a more balanced and sustainable urban expansion strategy.



Chichester's cathedral and compact city centre,



“the Plan is **not** able to meet the full, objectively assessed housing needs”



Chichester Local Plan Key Policies Pre-submission 2014-2029

Top ten towns and cities that are least affordable

Name of city	Average salary	Average house price
Chichester	£25,801	£391,778
Oxford	£31,837	£407,698
Guildford	£32,415	£469,480
Brighton	£30,311	£382,995
Exeter	£26,316	£286,770
Winchester	£29,662	£401,090
Wolverhampton	£27,351	£206,330
London	£41,833	£581,563
Cambridge	£33,946	£346,089
Chelmsford	£31,049	£351,120

Best and worst areas to buy, Adzuna, 2013

LOCAL AUTHORITIES NEED TO BE BOLD AND VISIONARY!

Lack of a clear strategy supporting development

Like their larger counterparts, many English historic cities have a damaged urban image that they would like to improve. World-class heritage and preserved treasures of the past often live side by side with unaddressed gaps in the urban fabric, uncomfortable functional overlaps and derelict or undeveloped city areas. Such problems harm the character and image of the city and justify public support for large scale regeneration projects in historic cores. The opportunity to fix a damaged urban image through a new and careful intervention should normally be taken but sometimes it is impaired by poor decision making.

The Friarsgate development in Lichfield clearly illustrates this. Friarsgate is a £100 million regeneration scheme in the historic core based on a large commercial complex with retail, cinemas and public spaces, enjoying strong support from the local community: when asked whether Friarsgate “will rejuvenate the city centre”, 70% said yes (Lichfield Mercury survey, April 4, 2014). However, the project is affected by continuous changes and delays reflecting the lack of a strong city-led vision defining the strategic aims for the area and a clear and streamlined planning process. Friarsgate is taking many years to take shape (the first planning consent was granted in December 2006), as continuous changes to its architectural image, scale and programme keep being made. The quality of the project is highly debated in the city, and the developers are accused of hardly considering the local scale, existing functions and the relation to heritage. Indeed, the proposals appear isolated in the 3D simulations provided and its relation to the immediate context is not visible. Local groups understandably complain that the scheme does not work towards complementing and improving the surrounding built fabric.

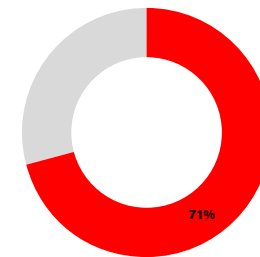
This uncertainty is linked to the apparent lack of a publicly-led vision, defining the aims of the community for the Friarsgate area. The development is affected by retail market changes, the changing economic climate and short-term priorities of the developers (who have also changed along the way) rather than a stable vision endorsed by the city. The investors have successively included and removed parts of the programme such as a hotel, cinemas, restaurants and shops, and have tried to attract several large retail chains to anchor the scheme, now also including new housing. As of January 2015, the council and the community is again waiting for a government grant to trigger the development and yet another reformulation of the scale and programme of Friarsgate.

Lichfield has suffered from development pressure due to its location north of the West Midlands Conurbation, and is seen as an attractive place to move to. The Council has taken a proactive approach to housing growth, carrying out characterisations of the whole district to find suitable development areas and negotiating some high-quality housing schemes. But in the historic city itself the authority has had difficulties in achieving development that reinforces the character of the place. Friarsgate illustrates how a long and complex process can fail to achieve a clear vision and develop in a void, whose blurredness is an opportunity for developers to work on the scheme as if it were for a mixed use commercial programme in any other generic location.

Furthermore, the planning obligations – i.e. what types of compensations have to be given to the community in exchange for new developments – are unclear and generic instead of negotiated and targeted at regenerating the local area. Planning obligations have now changed into the Community Infrastructure Levy, a system of compensations designed to be faster and more transparent than case by case negotiations between councils and developers, but whose homogeneity in all situations may result in even less targeted compensations for local communities and heritage, and a lesser acknowledgement by the community of the advantages of new development.



Lichfield's cathedral and its pedestrian high street in a dense urban fabric



■ It is just what the city needs
■ It is a waste of money

Lichfield's Friarsgate project received overwhelming public support

Lichfield's Friarsgate development is an **infill in the town centre**, but uncertainty has led to opportunistic proposals

2006:
Planning consent granted for Friarsgate

November 2011:
"Revisions have been made"

June 2012:
"New plans are unveiled"



April 2013:
"Friarsgate is dead and the council knows it. About time it's dropped."

April 2014:
"New developers a step closer"

January 2011:
"Design rethink on show."



January 2012:
"...scrapping of a planned hotel"

February 2013:
"Company has pulled out of the project."

January 2014:
"Calls for a radical rethink"

January 2015:
waiting for government grant and expecting revised plans 'according to economic climate'

We believe that valuable lessons can be learned from best practices in European cities dealing with similar problems. We have distilled four lessons – seamlessly integrating heritage and growth, creating and connecting distinctive new districts, implementing innovative alliances between all participants of urban growth, and turning heritage renovation into an economic asset for the city.

Ultimately, all these historic cities see themselves as laboratories of innovative tools and processes. In different ways, they successfully reconcile heritage and growth.



POPULATION GROWTH: HISTORIC CITIES IN ENGLAND AND IN EUROPE ARE FACING SIMILAR PRESSURES TO DELIVER NEW DWELLINGS

What can be done differently?

The four challenges that we detected for English historic cities illustrate that, more than assessing the success of failure of finished processes, the time is right to discuss alternatives for cities which are in between paths. We will approach the problem by looking abroad for places that do not prioritise how to protect heritage in spite of growth, but rather show how to grow better because of heritage.

We believe that valuable lessons can be learned from best practices in European cities dealing with similar problems of reconciliation between heritage and growth. We selected four fast-growing and important historic cities that have engaged creatively with this challenge and created bigger and better places in the process – Delft (Netherlands), Tübingen (Germany), Lund (Sweden), and Bayonne (France). These cities have experienced strong and continuous

growth in the last decades and, like English cities, all expect a significant population increase for the next. And they have produced new dwellings at a similar pace to their English counterparts. Between 2001 and 2011, they added 5% to 13% to their housing stock, while our five English case studies grew between 5% and 18% (Ely is an exception, with 34% more dwellings in ten years, but departing from a very low population base). What follows is a survey of good practices in these cities, which reflect the fact that, more than how the city looks, it is really about how it works. They speak directly to the challenges faced in England about how to achieve ambitious growth without uncontrolled expansion; how to ensure heritage renovation and modernisation and keep city centres lively; how to avoid detachment between old and new parts of the city; and how to make sure that local institutions and communities are active participants in urban growth.



Delft's vibrant central market



Lund's medieval cathedral

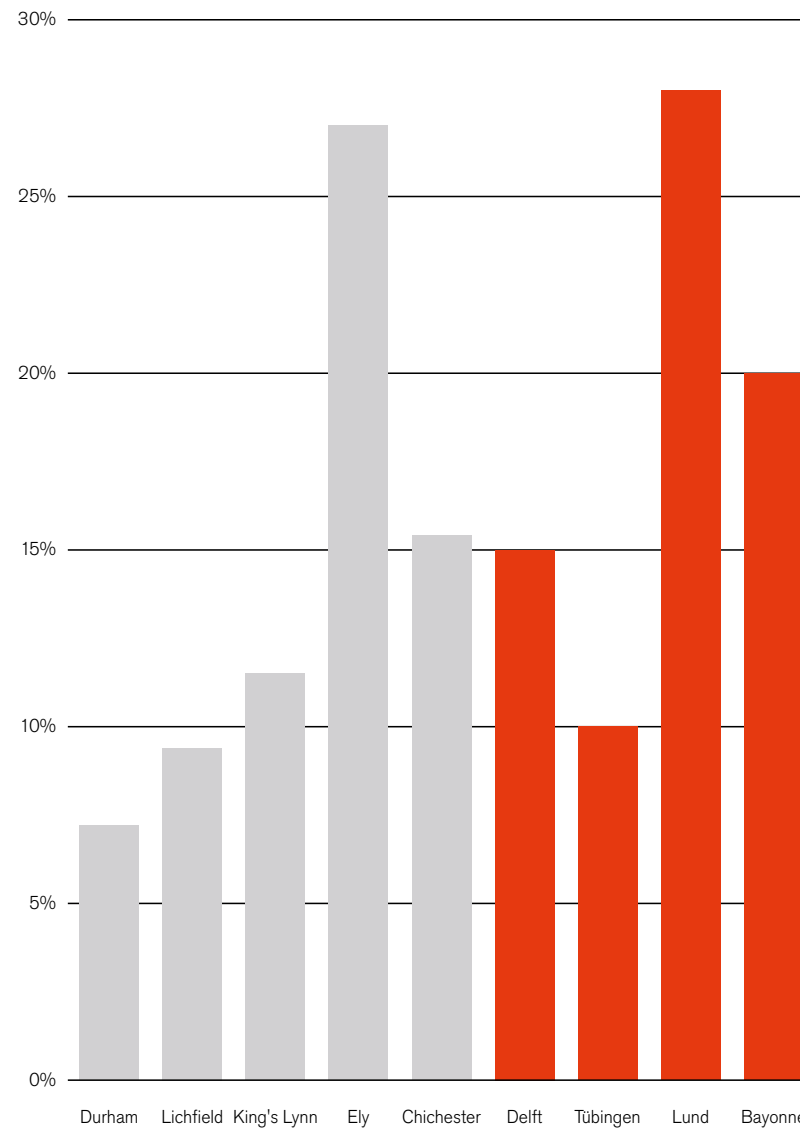


Bayonne's historic centre and Gothic cathedral



Tübingen's dense and vibrant historic core

Population projections, historic cities, 2012-2032



INTEGRATING NEW BUILDINGS IN HISTORIC TOWN CENTRES:

- GROWTH ACCOMMODATED ON SMALL SITES WITHIN THE HISTORIC CORE, AS OPPOSED TO GREENFIELD EXPANSION
- HERITAGE IS CONSIDERED AS GREAT DESIGN FOR URBAN LIFE

Providing housing by integrating heritage and growth

With 1,500 listed buildings and 700 national monuments, the case of Delft illustrates a policy of continuous renovation of the historic city through contemporary interventions. In a sensitive heritage environment, the city encourages new interventions as a way to strengthen the historic structure and retrieve its former order. In one of the densest urban areas in Europe, Delft has little room to grow and the historic city is characterised by a dense coexistence of old and new buildings. This view is illustrated by the heritage agency slogan 'Delft: creating history': heritage protection is based on repurposing and reusing historic buildings, allowing sensible transformations and directing public subsidies that ensure that they are constantly used and protected from decay.

This is based on a presumption in favour of good design: heritage is interpreted as great design for urban life rather than a snapshot of the past, and more and new great design should be encouraged alongside it that will be heritage in the future too. Although protected areas and restrictions to construction do exist, heritage protection works through the positive tools of design guidelines and a city-led vision of growth, rather than negative measures that excavate a regulatory moat around the historic city.

Because of this approach, the historic core of Delft has some unusual features. With 12,000 residents, it is the youngest and liveliest district in the city, served by a constantly renovated housing stock: only 46% of the existing housing units in the historic centre were built before 1906, and 40% were built after 1980, on average with the rest of the city, including post-war expansions. However, the streets of central Delft will reveal a mostly preserved historic fabric and a strong presence of heritage. This shows how well they managed to integrate and dilute the needs for modernisation and growth in the historic fabric without damaging its unique qualities.

Accommodating inner-city development

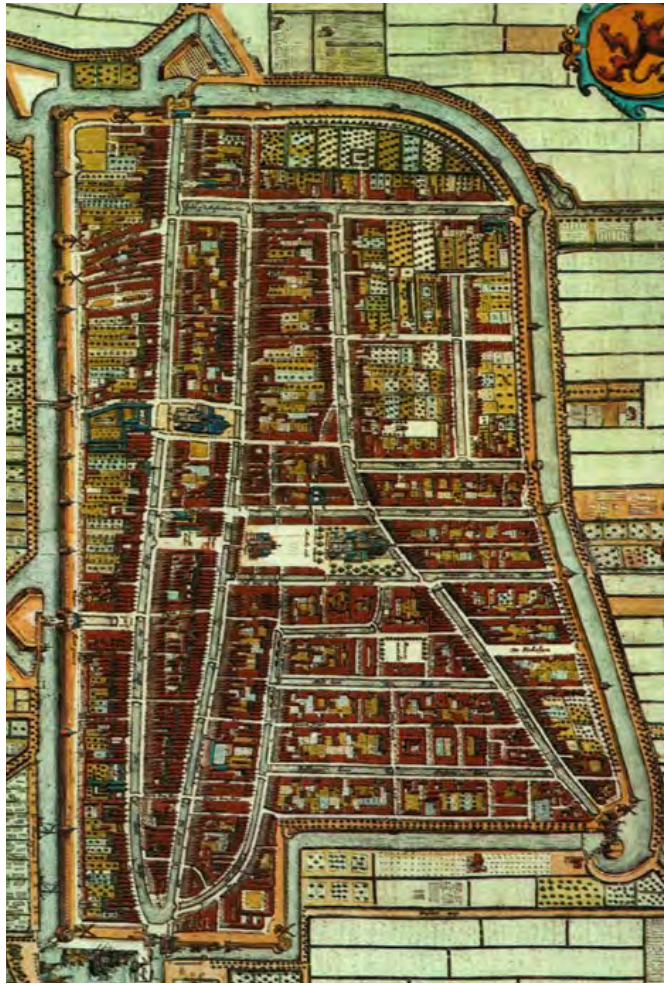
Tübingen is a fast-growing historic city in Southern Germany with 89,000 inhabitants and 41,000 dwellings and increasing need for housing. The city has taken control of the growth process by putting forward the concept of 'Innenentwicklung' – inner city development – and has not allowed development outside the city boundaries since 2007. Development is based on infill of building gaps, regeneration of existing fabric and redevelopment of brownfield sites. Through infill alone, the city managed to provide 1,834 new housing units between 2006 and 2012. Additionally, brownfield areas have been transformed in compact and lively new neighbourhoods. The first projects from the 1990s have grown into mixed-use districts with over 4,000 people, 1,200 jobs and old and new buildings integrated in a distinctive local identity.

The city of Tübingen highlights several advantages of inner city development:

- Accommodating growth while preserving urban scale and density.
- Protecting natural and green areas from sprawl.
- Saving money due to the lesser need to extend infrastructure to new expansion.
- Local retail profiting from a larger and renovated consumer basin.
- Families retained for longer leading to a younger population.
- Mixed uses increasing liveability and supporting the 'city of short distances' concept.
- Urban image improved by well designed infills and correction of urban gaps.
- Heritage repurposed, maintained and integrated in growth, preventing vacancy and decay.

Tübingen follows several policies to implement the concept:

- An agency with powers to own, develop and sell land plots, namely existing brownfield areas.
- Easy land use conversion, both in large sites and small historic buildings, encouraging functional renovation and mixed uses throughout the city.
- 'Activation of building gaps', a city-led survey of all vacant lots and infill areas made available in a public, online-based 'marketplace' open for investors.
- City-led masterplans with clear and transparent requirements for new buildings.
- Integration of old and new buildings through shared public spaces.



Delft in 1652



Delft's centre: old and new



Delft today

ORGANISING GROWTH BY TRANSPORT CORRIDORS:

- DISTINCTIVE NEW QUARTERS PROMOTED FOR THEIR LIFESTYLES
- WELL-CONNECTED TO THE CENTRE BY PUBLIC TRANSPORT
- PARTNERSHIP WITH LOCAL INSTITUTIONS TO CREATE ANCHORS

Developing, connecting and branding new city districts

In the middle of the dense Randstad, between The Hague and Rotterdam, Delft does not have space for sprawling expansion, and the Dutch planning system, especially in the Randstad, favours densification and compactness in order to preserve the 'green heart' of the city region. Despite those limitations the city of Delft accommodated substantial growth, especially in the modernist housing expansions of the 1930s and the larger districts built after 1960. These new areas are very close to the core city and were able to keep Delft a compact city, despite its growth. The city promotes cycling as the best way to get to know the different neighbourhoods and tram and bus lines connect them between each other, to the centre, and to the wider city region.

Additionally, the city of Delft openly promotes its eight districts as equally desirable, depending on age, activity, lifestyle, etc. This particular form of city branding does not create a qualitative hierarchy between more and less desirable areas or between the historic centre and the remaining city. Urban quality is assumed everywhere and each district is given a clear and distinctive identity, based on different housing types, public spaces, commerce and services. This helps to decentralize housing demand, opening up many possibilities and distributing the pressures for growth. It also helps to balance prices and the social mix throughout the city, creating a greater identification of communities with their city areas.

Supporting expansion through urban catalysts and transport routes

The city of Lund is developing the 'knowledge axis' concept, a linear urban expansion along a tram line, linking the city centre to the new Science Village Scandinavia area and connecting the city's several research institutions. The anchor of the project is Science Village Scandinavia, a joint venture between the City of Lund, Lund University and Region Skane, built around two large European research facilities, the ESS and MAX IV laboratories, and providing 250,000 m² of buildable floor area. The vision is to develop a 17 ha cluster around both laboratories as a 'science village' that can bring world-class research to Lund. The area will include research institutions, university facilities, office space for companies, accommodation, services and recreation.

But what could be another autonomous, monofunctional area separated from the existing city, is being tightly integrated with the historic core through a development corridor that will orientate Lund's growth in the coming years. The historic centre and Science Village work as two catalysts of a larger urban plan connecting the city's unique concentration of science and research institutions and regenerating the urban areas around them. A new 5km-long tram line, linking the city centre to the Science Village facilities and everything in between, supports the whole development and provides the basic transport infrastructure to the up to 40,000 residents and workers expected in the area.

Both new housing and heritage renovation areas are planned along the axis, alongside offices, hotels, parks, and cycle and pedestrian paths. The plan works as a catalyst to attract more university students (a first impulse came with the construction of 200 new student dwellings in 2013) and to build new or expand existing museums and theatres.

The scale and morphology of the new district are close to the existing fabric and the intention is to gradually consolidate and densify the connecting tissue between the city and the extension by regenerating existing areas and building on infill sites and vacant lots. This will be implemented during the next 25 years as a flexible masterplan divided into six intervention areas with detailed planning guidelines.

The city and region authorities have partnered with Lund University to develop growth 'anchors': research institutions that will organise and direct urban growth for the next 20 years. Their strategic locations help create new mixed-use urban centralities, with positive impacts in the local economy and the capture of new markets for the future housing supply.

The example of Lund provides important lessons on how to plan for new city expansions tightly connected to the historic city by public transport, how to use large-scale development as catalysts to regenerate a wider area, and how to incorporate the city's research institutions in joint projects with public authorities and use their assets to create new and experimental ways to manage urban growth.



Delft: Promotion of the city's eight distinctive districts in the municipal website



Lund's knowledge axis is a growth corridor

Lund's tramway connects new and old



COMMUNITIES DRIVING URBAN GROWTH:

- COOPERATIVES HAVE PRIORITY OVER LARGE DEVELOPERS
- CITY DEVELOPS AND DIVIDES SITES INTO SMALL PARCELS
- CITY KEEPS ONLINE REGISTER OF PLOTS FOR INNER-CITY INFILL

Making the community drive urban growth

Urban growth in Tübingen is largely driven by community-led models. The city is Germany's main hub of the private building cooperative model, in which groups of families, single persons or small companies get together to develop a building according to their own vision. They are granted an option on a piece of public land which they can buy once the cooperative has been set up and the city authorities have approved their concept.

Housing provided by this model can cost 15-20% less than buying from a developer and tends to reach high resale prices, making it attractive for local banks. The sense of identity in neighbourhoods increases, as communities develop their own bespoke 'piece of land' and feel empowered as actors of urban development. The model also allows for higher design standards and more diverse architectural concepts than a large, mass-developed scheme, contributing to greater innovation, namely in energy efficiency. Finally, it creates a broader social mix, regarding income, age and education.

The city plays a central role in this process, through the urban development agency that buys and releases land for development. It defines a masterplan for each area, determines local infrastructure, public spaces and plot size, and sells the plots, giving priority to cooperatives over commercial developers. Land use management is a fundamental point, as the plots are divided into small parcels to encourage architectural and functional diversity, but also to make them affordable for small community models rather than desirable for large developers. Plots are sold at a fixed price, and the choice of the cooperative that will build is based on the concept presented – contribution to the neighbourhood, social and functional impact, architectural quality, technological innovation, etc. The initial option on the plot allows cooperatives to formalise the group, design the building and settle their budgeting before the actual purchase, making it easier for small-scale models to secure their position and compete with larger developers.

The cooperatives must respond to the requirements of the masterplan but are free to implement their architectural vision. There are opportunities for participation in the design of public spaces and cooperation in larger plans, such as common green areas and underground parking.

Ensuring a publicly-led vision for urban regeneration

Like other historic cities, Delft also needs to repair its urban image, regenerating derelict areas and unaddressed building gaps. In Delft this is mostly led by a strong vision provided by the city rather than the ever-changing proposals of developers. The new shopping, housing and cultural quarter at the south of the historic city clearly illustrates this. The regeneration of the former industrial area started in the 1990s supported by a general public acceptance of the need for change.

The process was initiated by the city and negotiated with the community, who demanded the preservation of the historic fabric beyond the immediate building site. This started as a manifest by local inhabitants, later turned into a planning strategy. This strategy, along with the programme and scale of the development was led by successive city authorities, keeping with the initial intentions. The different plans and the changes in location and scale of the buildings emerged from public demand for a better relation to the historic fabric. Market conditions and short-term priorities of developers did not substantially affect the scheme – only the timing of the project, which took years to implement, can be attributed to changing economic tides. Most importantly, the set of planning obligations was conceived as a catalyst for the regeneration of the wider historic area, rather than a generic compensation. It was targeted at specific local aims, such as regenerating small retail in the historic buildings and creating underground parking near the historic core to achieve a car-free centre. This led to a wider acceptance of the scheme, as people could clearly identify the tangible compensations being implemented.



City of Delft
Regenerated public spaces as part of a large redevelopment scheme



Cooperative building model in Tübingen



USING THE HISTORIC CENTRE AS AN URBAN LABORATORY:

- MODERNISE THE URBAN FABRIC AND REPAIR IT WITH INFILLS
- AVOID 'MUSEUMIFICATION' OF THE TOWN HISTORIC CENTRE
- CLAIM HISTORIC CORE AS AN ECO-QUARTER OF THE FUTURE

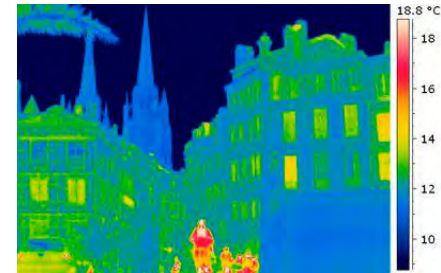
Turning heritage protection into an economic asset for the city

The city of Bayonne has been concerned with updating heritage and avoiding museumification for a long time. Being more than a showcase for tourism implies keeping the historic core lively, liveable, healthy and accessible to all. Historic centres often lose such qualities due to the decay of the built fabric, which is not updated to meet current demands for comfort, accessibility and energy efficiency.

To address these issues, in 2009 Bayonne put together a network of nine European historic cities and developed the LINKS project (Low-tech INherited from the old european city as a Key for performance and Sustainability). Basically, the LINKS project argues that historic centres are the eco-quarters of the future, due to their scale, efficient and compact urban forms, short distances between urban functions, social diversity and communal life, and performance and local origin of building materials. But this claim only makes sense if the historic centres are allowed to modernise their building fabric to preserve their desirability and the quality of life of their inhabitants.

In fact, the project emerged from several complaints by historic centre inhabitants about the negative tools and protective regulations that were constraining their necessities – prohibition of double glazing, solar panels, etc. On the other hand, studies conducted on local historic buildings showed that they are quite energy-efficient and can greatly enhance their performance through sensible renovation works. The city started to consider ways to integrate modernisation and preservation into a single framework that would restore the attractiveness of the historic centre.

The LINKS project opened up opportunities in different areas. One is the environmental and social impacts of the 'eco-renovation' concept – renovation aimed at enhancing a building's comfort and energy-efficiency while preserving and restoring its historic architectural qualities. Eco-renovation allows less energy consumption, provides a healthier environment, and enhances the qualities of local heritage. But there is another set of opportunities for the local economy. By working with local professional associations, LINKS aimed at identifying local resources (materials and craftsmen), mobilising local industry to produce and distribute the necessary materials and accessories, and developing a local knowledge base for eco-renovation tools and techniques that can be an economic asset for the region. This 'toolkit' of local knowledge and production can be turned into economically viable products and processes, potentially creating new jobs and activities.



Bayonne has proposed to develop a EU-wide package of heritage renovation techniques



Bayonne: high density infill in the heart of the historic city

FUTURE-PROOF HISTORIC CENTRES

FINAL REPORT, JUNE 2013





Fourth step. Workshop in Bayonne: "How to make eco-restoration an asset for local economies?"

by Sylvie Durstuy, Deputy Mayor for economy of the Municipality of Bayonne

Extremely concerned about the preservation of its heritage and the image of its historic centre, the City of Bayonne joined the LINKS project, attracted by the promise of interesting, technique exchanges. A first statement announced the guidelines: our historic heritage is threatened by the implementation of new thermal regulations which are inadequate, yet housing in historic centres cannot remain on the side lines of important energy challenges. It is therefore necessary to rediscover and make known the most effective restoration techniques and those most adapted to old and fragile buildings. Exchanges at local and European levels, bringing about rapid results, these techniques, appropriate

and effective, were quickly identified. To summarise and simplify them, the LINKS partners grouped them under the term "eco-restoration", referred to as "eco-construction" for new buildings.

The question of technique has become secondary and LINKS has had to put the matter in a different light. The economic dimension of the project has become an essential component of cogitation because even with the best technical and environmental methods, eco-restoration has to face the reality of economic constraints!

How can local markets face such development in techniques? how can they respond to increasing demand? how can craftsmen be updated on new skills? how can the unavoidable, additional costs of these new methods be absorbed?




Bayonne Links programme: sustainable development in EU historic cities

We value the idea of a 'living laboratory' to adapt and test innovative ideas. Therefore, after discussing the underlying problems and challenges faced by English historic cities and embarking on a tour of European cities for best practices, we selected a specific English historic town as a site for concrete proposals.

King's Lynn, in West Norfolk, is an historic town currently facing the challenges of urban growth. We looked more in depth at its history and future prospects to propose three alternatives that accommodate future growth needs while containing expansion, potentiating heritage assets and integrating old and new parts of the city into a consistent urban form.



KING'S LYNN'S COMPACT HISTORIC CENTRE IS STILL TODAY AN **ACTIVE, PEDESTRIAN** **FRIENDLY URBAN ENVIRONMENT**

The long history of King's Lynn is visible in the extensive heritage across the urban area. The town has 13 Grade I, 41 Grade II* and 250 Grade II buildings, including medieval buildings, former port areas and merchant houses, market places and several fine churches. This heritage coexists alongside pedestrianised commercial areas, several seasonal events and the refurbished Vancouver Shopping Centre, part of the larger town centre regeneration project.

As of 2011, the Core Strategy has detected several sustainability issues that are relevant for the future expansion of King's Lynn as well as the improvement and regeneration of the town's heritage: there is a general lack of highly-skilled employment; there is a low proportion of affordable housing for an ageing and sometimes deprived population; tourism and the service industry as a whole are still an underperforming part of the economy; the historic centre is uncared for in many places and sometimes unsafe; and the transport patterns are seen as unsustainable (high car-dependency) due to the dispersed population.

The town centre retail expansion area, included in the Core Strategy, aims for an addition 20,000 m² of retail floor area at the very core of King's Lynn, as a direct response to the underperformance highlighted above. The aim is to secure the town as a sub-regional shopping, cultural and leisure destination, strengthening the role of tourism and services in the local economy.

Therefore all new development in this area should reinforce a positive visitor experience, enhance a sense of place and identity and support the tourism, culture and leisure economies. However, with all this attention to tourism and retail, only about 4,800 people live in the central ward of King's Lynn (10.5% of the urban area population), and there is greater deprivation there than elsewhere in the borough. See the contrast to the 12,000 people in the core of Delft (roughly the same size), the liveliest and youngest area of the city. This means the historic centre could easily accommodate more residents.

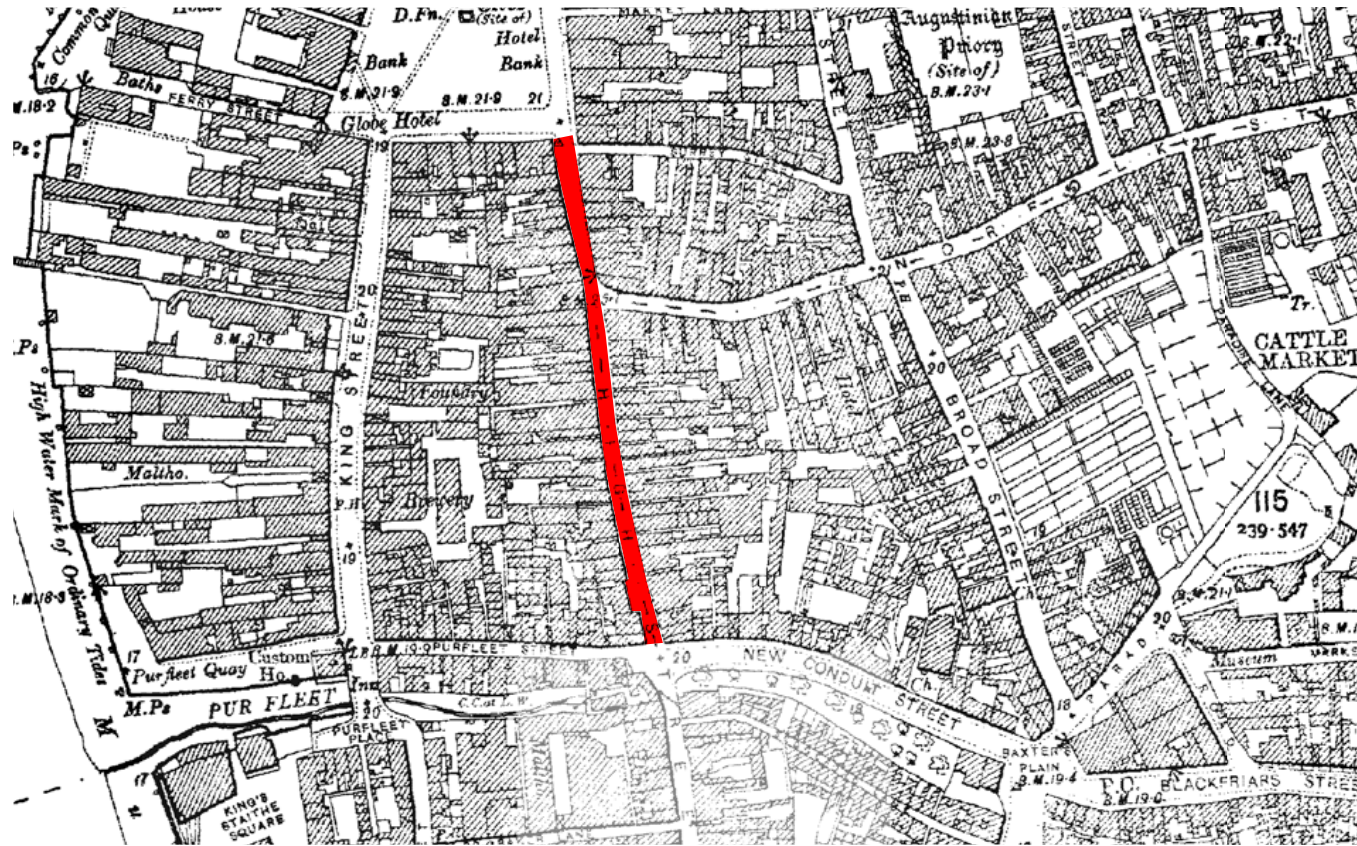
Furthermore, this area is somewhat detached from the remaining town: once one leaves the core, the more recent expansion mostly follows a low-density, monofunctional, car-dependent model (roughly to the west of the railway station, southwest of the Nar and northwest of the docks). A strong disruption between two contrasting types of urban fabric is visible, with few transition areas of 20th century growth that qualify as a modern, compact and multifunctional town. On the contrary: these expansion areas between the centre and the suburbs are rather dormant, lacking functional and spatial diversity, and experienced little growth between 2001 and 2011 (around 6%). By contrast, the housing stock in the centre increased by 15% in the same period, a similar rate to the more remote areas of South Wooton and South and West Lynn. This suggests that the 'in-between' areas making for most of the town's physical footprint also need special attention.



King's Lynn site visit, 21 November 2014: a dense, walkable town centre



King's Lynn 20th century expansion led to the creation of heavily car-dependent districts



King's Lynn in the late 19th century



King's Lynn today

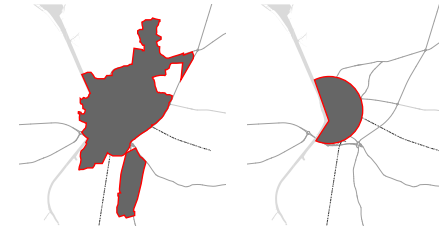
BUT THE TOWN EXPANDED OUTWARDS AT INCREASINGLY LOW DENSITIES, MAKING IT MORE DEPENDENT ON THE CAR; FURTHER EXPANSION IS CURRENTLY PLANNED

Population growth has been high in the last 20 years and King's Lynn will continue to expand in the future, with at least 7,500 new homes in the urban area in the 2001-2026 period. However, growth in King's Lynn has corresponded to the outward expansion of the town, at increasingly low densities. The historic compact city is now an island blocked by a barrier of sprawling residential expansions which illustrate the growth model of the 20th century. These areas are interspersed by industrial, logistics and large 'big-box' shopping areas which do not contribute to the enhancement of the historic city or to integrated growth.

Many of the challenges detected earlier for English historic cities are present here - ambitious expansion leading to increasing occupation of rural and green areas; protection of the historic core with little concern for the spatial quality of housing and public space provision in the remaining city; a damaged urban image punctuated by unresolved urban gaps and uncomfortable functional overlaps; and mass-developed, detached and sprawling expansions with little architectural quality. The overarching challenge is not to transfer these practices to the 21st century growth model envisioned for King's Lynn.

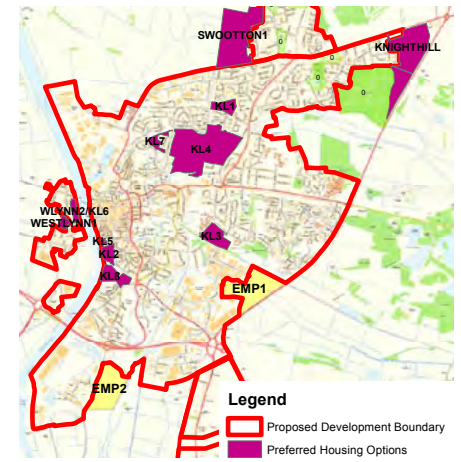
The stated vision and objectives of the Core Strategy show awareness of some of these challenges: there is an emphasis on brownfield development and urban renovation, residential development should have accessibility to services and transport, there are specific 'urban renaissance' strategies for key areas, and there is a general concern with design quality, enhancement of historic surroundings and the quality of public spaces. However, a more precise analysis of the planned growth areas shows that there is some potential for improvement.

To start, only 1,600 of the new dwellings needed until 2026 will be within King's Lynn, leaving a majority for greenfield expansion in adjacent settlements. But due to the contrasting nature of King's Lynn urban fabric, even the homes within the existing town will mostly be additions to the low-density, residential model. Only 400 of the 1,610 dwellings planned are located in relatively compact areas (KL2 and KL5), following the type of fabric of the centre (a lively town centre can comfortably accommodate 80 to 100 dwellings per hectare). Other expansion areas are surprisingly near the centre but are planned at very low densities in areas mainly characterised by a spread of mass-developed, single-family houses, apparent car-dependency, lack of commerce and services, and wide streets with excessive capacity planned around roundabouts and cul-de-sacs. Such a contrast to the compact, diverse and multifunctional fabric of historic King's Lynn happens immediately next to the core. At densities of 40, 30 and 6 dwellings per hectare, and with little reference to other programmes beyond residential use, some of the new expansion planned will further add to this disruption. It may fail to address the sustainability issues in the Core Strategy, namely the transport patterns due to the dispersed population, the need for urban containment and the quality and safety of the historic core, as the lack of residential population and demographic renovation may constrain the use and renovation of heritage and slow down solutions for existing urban gaps and derelict areas.



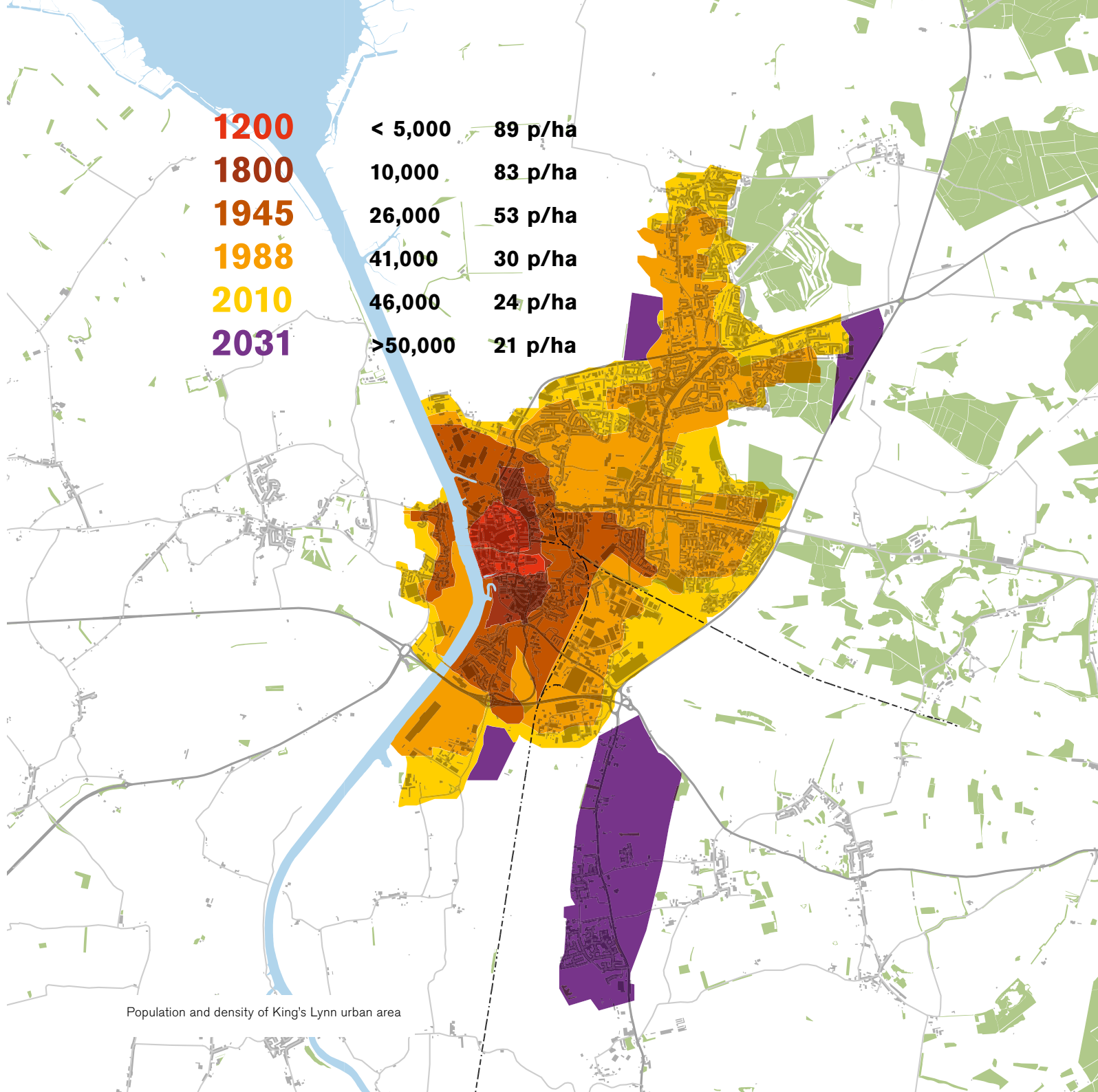
Footprint of King's Lynn as planned for 2031 50,000 people at a density of 21 p/ha requires high levels of mobility and provides poor accessibility.

Hypothetical footprint of King's Lynn for 50,000 people at a density of 80 p/ha. Such a place would provide very good accessibility and less need for mobility.



Extract from King's Lynn Local Plan, Preferred Options for a Detailed Policies and Sites Plan, Growth Consultation, July 2013

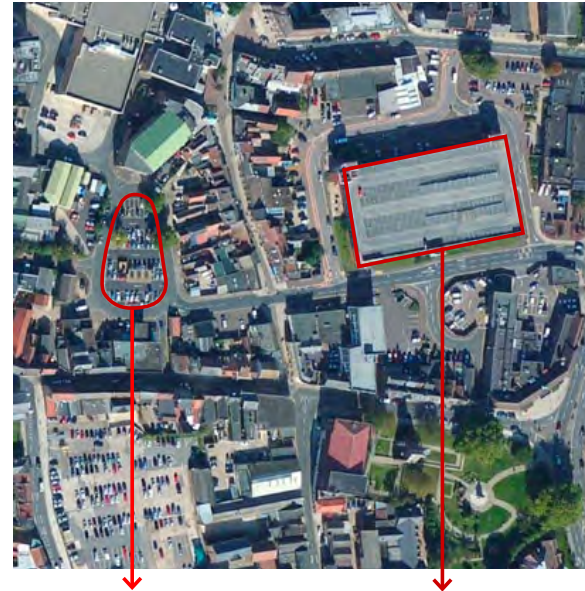
1200	< 5,000	89 p/ha
1800	10,000	83 p/ha
1945	26,000	53 p/ha
1988	41,000	30 p/ha
2010	46,000	24 p/ha
2031	>50,000	21 p/ha



Population and density of King's Lynn urban area

THERE ARE OVER 36 HECTARES OF **SURFACE CAR PARKING** IN THE TOWN, BREAKING THE CONTINUITY OF ITS URBAN FORM AND TAKING UP VALUABLE LAND

Urban development is never a perfectly streamlined story of efficient and consistent growth. Every town has unresolved spaces and breaks in the continuity of urban form, resulting from demolitions, incomplete block developments, economic downturns and several other factors throughout urban history. Such spaces are often left unplanned and end up having ancillary functions that do not fully explore their urban potential. Visible illustrations of these gaps in King's Lynn are the sites of surface car parking. A total of 360,000 m² of surface parking exists in King's Lynn, 85,000 of which is in the historic core. They are mostly unresolved, leftover sites in prime locations, where more interesting and profitable uses haven't had the opportunity to consolidate. They create disruptions in the urban fabric and harm the urban image, most notably in the historic core. While it is important to provide parking spaces in the historic centre, those surface parking areas clearly suggest that the sites could be better used to reconstruct the town's compact historic structure and retrieve its former order, while providing more space for housing, offices and commerce. Furthermore, the efficiency of surface car parking can be enhanced: each surface car space occupies an average of 21 m², which could be turned into 6 m² in multi-storey parking built in strategic locations across the town, releasing a large amount of land for new development in the core of King's Lynn.



58 car spaces
1,215 sqm
21 sqm / car

645 car spaces
3,900 sqm
6 sqm / car



Car parks in King's Lynn

REPAIRING THE TOWN'S URBAN FABRIC: DEVELOP HOUSING ON FORMER PARKING SITES

- WITH MORE EFFICIENT PARKING, ALL THE CARS PARKED IN THE CENTRE COULD FIT ON **1/3 OF THE LAND** THEY CURRENTLY TAKE
- THIS WOULD FREE UP TO **6 HA OF LAND** FOR DEVELOPMENT
- AT REASONABLE DENSITY, **1,000 UNITS** COULD BE DEVELOPED IN THE CENTRE, TO HOUSE OVER **2,300 PEOPLE**

The first alternative proposal for King's Lynn looks at the problems of urban quality and liveability in the town centre and is relatively straightforward: use the urban gaps now occupied by surface car parks in the historic town to create infill areas and provide housing. A project of housing provision by infill and densification of these areas would build upon the attractiveness of living in the historic centre to avoid new expansion, save money on extended infrastructure, rejuvenate the demography and expand the consumer basin of local retail, improve short distances in daily mobility, rebuild the historic compact structure and add continuity to the urban image, and trigger the repurposing, use and maintenance of nearby heritage, preventing vacancy and decay.

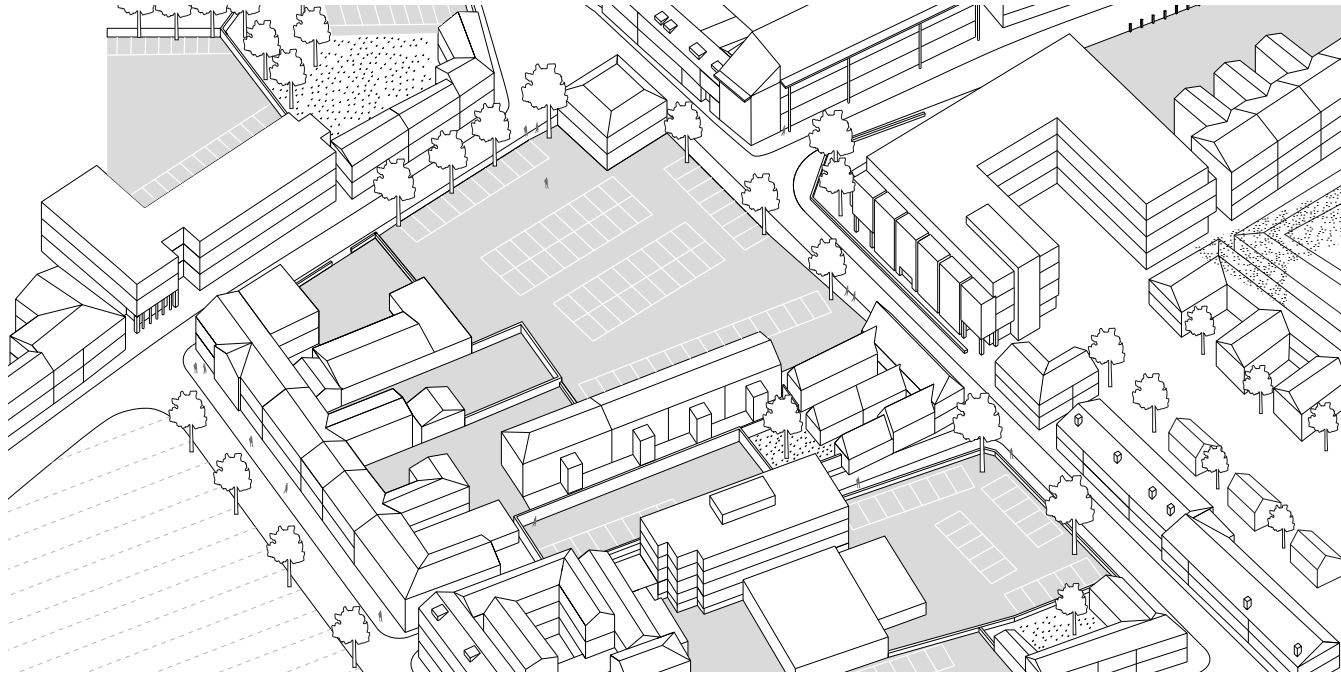
We propose to use the 85,000 m² of surface car parks now available in the centre, providing more efficient multi-storey parking in strategic locations. Assuming that only half of each released site would be occupied with buildings, and limiting building heights to three storeys to respect the scale of the surroundings, around 92,000 m² of housing, for 2,300 people (at 40 m² per person), could be provided.

Assuming 2.33 people per household (as in the Preferred Options document), this would create around 1,000 new dwellings directly in the town centre, replacing a large amount of the housing units now planned to spread around King's Lynn. If the tendency for one-person households keeps growing, even more, smaller new dwellings could be created, adding vibrancy and economic potential to the historic core.

In contrast with some of the expansion areas currently planned, this proposal tries to make the town centre into something more than a car-dependent retail destination. It is in line with the objectives of brownfield redevelopment and more housing in the centre as stated in the Core Strategy, responds to existing policies of development near established services and transport links, optimisation of site potentials and city centre regeneration, and develops proposals originally mentioned in the King's Lynn Urban Renaissance Strategy.



Typical parking on King's Court: a potential site for careful inner-city infill redevelopments



King's Court today: 4,000 square metres of car park in a prime central location



Proposed housing development on King's Court's former car park

THE LARGE INDUSTRIAL AND RETAIL PARK IN THE SOUTH EAST OF KING'S LYNN IS **SEGREGATED** FROM THE TOWN'S COMPACT URBAN FABRIC

Like in many towns of England and Europe, some types of development in King's Lynn did not age well. Large retail parks are a typical example of something almost unanimously seen as having low urban quality, no public spaces or liveability and as being mostly monofunctional and car-dependent. Despite their acceptance as unavoidable in contemporary urbanisation, such areas are not usually considered part of the 'proper' city. Nevertheless, they occupy vast amounts of land, usually have very good connections, are often close to the main areas of the city and provide for the shopping and leisure needs of a great number of people. So why not build upon this potential and try to repair these territories by allowing them to be a valuable and integrated part of the city?

The expansion area to the south of Gaywood in King's Lynn is currently a retail park dominated by 'big box'-type shopping units.

As it is, it lacks urbanity, connectivity, functional diversity and spatial quality. Visually, functionally and in terms of public perception, it is segregated from the remaining urban fabric. But is also a well-connected area two kilometres from the town centre and within 25 minutes walking distance, concentrating retail and employment and playing an important role in the local economy. The challenge here will be how to make this area play a different role as an integral part of the town of King's Lynn.



King's Lynn retail park: poor accessibility for pedestrians and cyclists, typical out of town architecture and large open car parks



INTEGRATE THE RETAIL PARK TO THE URBAN SETTING: NEW CONNECTIONS FOR A MIXED-USE NEIGHBOURHOOD

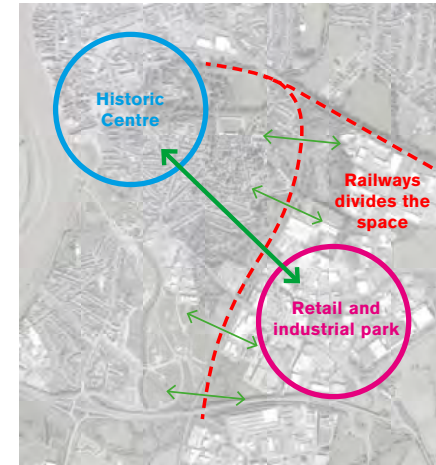
- REPAIR TERRITORIAL DIVISIONS TO FACILITATE MOBILITY AND INTEGRATION OF THE RETAIL PARK WITH THE TOWN
- PROMOTE PUBLIC TRANSPORTS, WALKING AND CYCLING ROUTES
- RESTRUCTURE THE URBAN FABRIC AND IMPLEMENT MIXED USE BY FILLING THE GAPS IN THE RETAIL PARK WITH HOUSING

The second idea for King's Lynn looks at the history of 20th century development and tries to build upon it to achieve better urban spaces. The proposal here is simply to integrate the 'big-box' retail park south of Gaywood with the larger city by turning it into a compact, distinctive, accessible and mixed use neighbourhood. Retail park areas are characterised by extensive unoccupied areas around and between the large shopping units. Parts of this free brownfield space could be used to accommodate new housing and services, which would profit from the already existing retail areas and infrastructure, with no new impact on current green or natural areas. The retail areas would also profit from more clients nearby, notably some who do not need to drive their car to go shopping. What is now a 'no man's land' of leftover spaces and informal parking between built units could be turned into a distinctive new type of urban neighbourhood, with middle-density collective housing, additional services, human scale streets and high-quality public spaces and landscaping. The retail units themselves would be integrated in a more qualified urban area around them and their visual impact would be diluted by the new development.

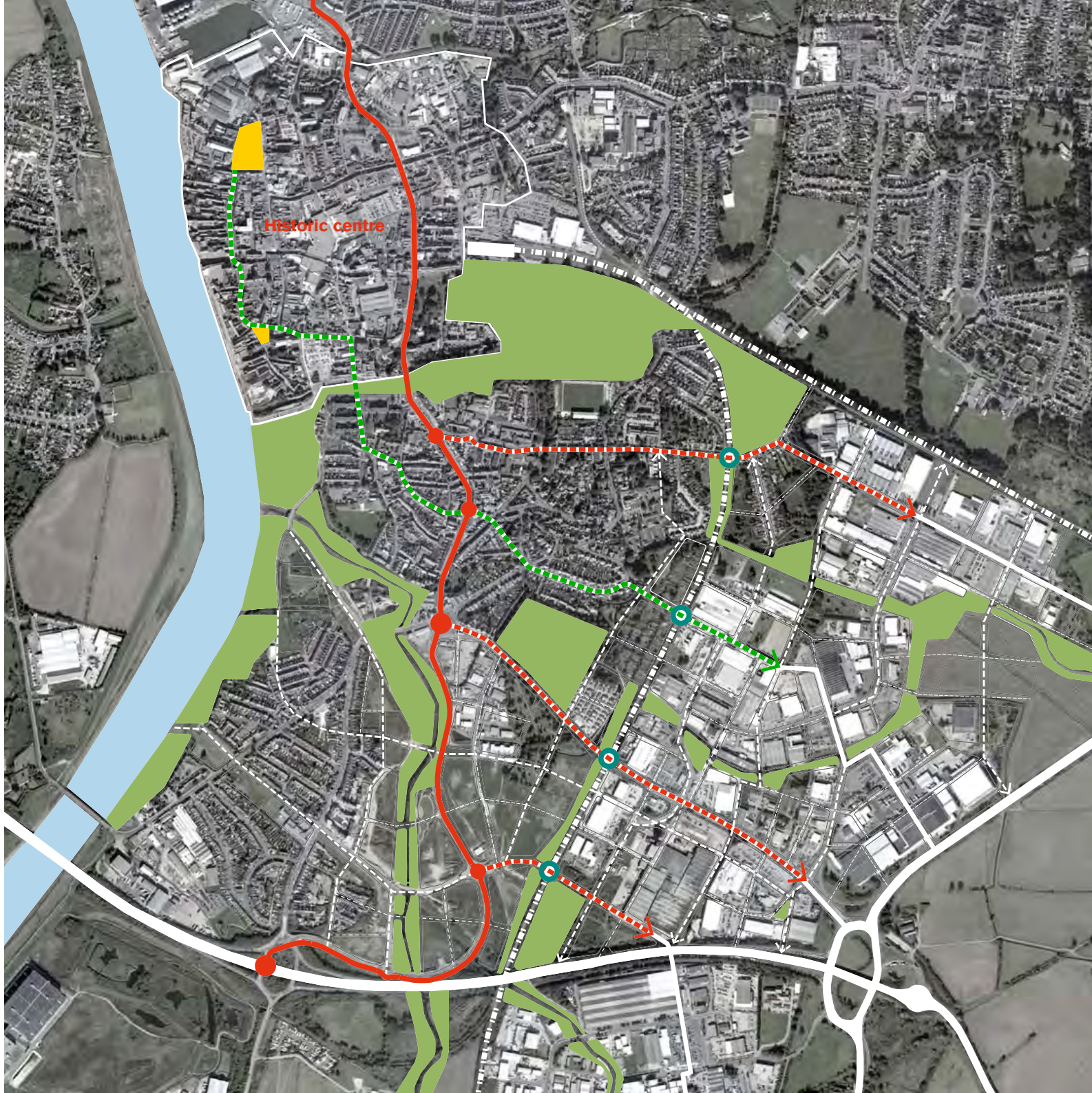
This is also important in King's Lynn because this area is the main access to the town when driving from south. Old and new areas of the town would be integrated in a consistent urban form, and public transport connections could be planned to reinforce this integration.

The proposal responds to the general Core Strategy objectives, as well as policies aiming for high-quality development in the commercial cores of the town (which are not limited to the town centre) and the Urban Renaissance Strategy proposal of diversifying the housing models and densifying peripheral areas. Depending on land ownership, this would demand mutually satisfying negotiations with the promoters and tenants of the existing retail park.

According to our calculations, a total of 12 hectares of brownfield land could be densified in this area. Built up at a lower density than in the town centre and with a three storeys maximum height, this would amount to 120,000 m² of new housing. Up to 3,000 people could eventually live in the 1,300 new dwellings that could occupy this area, again avoiding new expansion and adding urbanity to a well-located part of town.



With one train per hour in each direction to and from King's Lynn station, the railway should not be as strong a divide as it currently is. There is a potential to connect both sides: the historic centre and the retail and industrial park



Historic centre

EXCEEDING THE DEMAND FOR NEW DWELLINGS

WITHOUT EXPANDING THE TOWN:

- INFILLS ON CAR PARKS OF THE CITY CENTRE: 2,300 PEOPLE
- NEW MIXED USE QUARTER: OVER 3,000 PEOPLE
- FILLING THE URBAN GAPS: OVER 3,000 PEOPLE

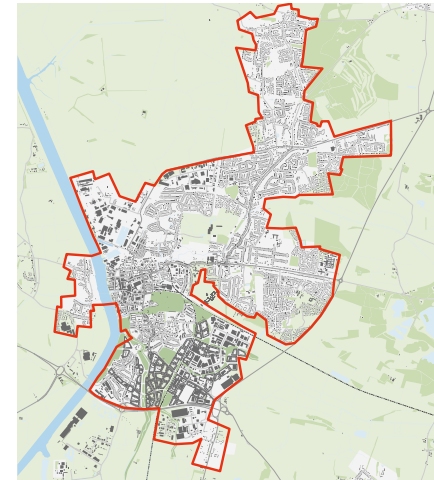
The third and final proposal to expand King's Lynn by applying the best practices learned from our case studies is simply to connect the old and new city areas into a compact and integrated urban form. As discussed earlier, the urban fabric of King's Lynn is characterised by a compact, multifunctional and architecturally diverse historic core immediately surrounded by suburban-type, low-density residential expansions which now accommodate most of the town's population and represent most of its urban footprint. These areas are being planned to grow at density levels similar to the existing ones, thus strengthening the disruption between both types of urban fabric and highlighting the absence of contemporary city areas with densities, functions and design qualities similar to the historic core.

The proposal is therefore to work on the densification and socio-economic diversification of the existing 20th century expansions around the core, and slowly turn them in actual urban areas, by adding compactness and urban continuity, creating spaces for retail and office programmes, diversifying the housing types and organising streets and circulation according to the capacity actually needed. This will provide a more balanced gradient of building densities from the centre to the periphery and help reduce the striking contrasts now visible. It will also add desirability to these areas and help make them more distinctive for a changing demography with a renewed interest in living in compact and multifunctional urban centres.

An important pilot area could be the surroundings of College of West Anglia Campus: the Core Strategy includes plans to expand the higher education offer in the town and link it to emerging firms, and a more diverse and dense urban fabric could include student and temporary housing, as well as new retail and office spaces.

In this scenario, the areas for new development should therefore be distributed in small infill plots throughout the various neighbourhoods nearer to the core, rather than concentrated in very large pieces of land. This is also a way to provide opportunities for smaller, community-led models to purchase and develop plots, instead of releasing land only at the large scale of mass developers. Public transport should build upon the density increase to provide greater coverage and a better service, integrating the old and new parts of town into a consistent urban form with greater accessibility and lesser mobility needs.

If the areas further away from the city centre were to remain untouched and only the areas closer to the core were to be occupied at approximately town centre densities (i.e. near but not necessarily exactly at KL8 and KL3), about 600 (KL8) and 800 (KL3 and vicinity) new dwellings could probably be achieved. With 1,000 new dwellings in the town centre (see proposal above), the 400 already planned for the central areas KL2 and KL5 and up to 1,300 in the retail park area, the vast majority of the growth needs of King's Lynn could be accommodated in a more contained and integrated manner, avoiding greenfield expansion, population dispersal and car dependency and contributing to a more attractive, diverse, well-designed and potentially more prosperous town.



Protecting greenfield land around King's Lynn: new development should fit within the existing boundaries of the town's built up areas.



We used the historic town of King's Lynn as a laboratory to adapt and implement some of these practices, by identifying the challenges and visions of the local authorities and communities and finding room for improvement. We proposed three interventions, framed by the local strategic documents, that would accommodate all the expected population growth within the current urban boundaries. This would enhance both the historic and the contemporary urban fabric. The constraints of national legislation and the relation to private actors must be creatively adapted and negotiated. In the end a strong vision shared by the local council and community may well create a better town that capitalises on heritage and harmonious growth.

We conclude by discussing how our vision, and the practices we found most successful, can be implemented. This is not an impossible task, and we finish our journey in the historic city of Salisbury, a promising example of the reconciliation of heritage and growth, following some of the practices we would like to expand to other places.



CONTRIBUTING TO AN URBAN VISION

Reconcile heritage and urban growth

'Perhaps the best surviving example of a medieval planned town in England' (Local Plan 2003), Salisbury is a city of 45,000 people in southeast Wiltshire. Like the other historic cities we looked at, Salisbury is expecting significant population growth in the next two decades and the local authority is preparing its Core Strategy accordingly. However, while being affected by growth pressures similar to other cities, Salisbury seems to be aware of the challenges brought by the scale of development and worked actively to anticipate them.

The Wiltshire Core Strategy, adopted in January 2015, allocated sites for 6,000 new homes in the Salisbury urban area. However, they are not sprawling greenfield expansions but rather compact sites, closely connected to the existing city and respectful of the scale and urban forms of the existing city. Up to 3,950 homes will be built in 'strategic sites', which will be fully master-planned in partnership between the local community, the local authority and developers, as part of the planning application, before being released for building. The Core Strategy, whose preparation process included discussions with and active engagement by English Heritage, defines specific requirements for each strategic site, including site constraints, qualitative priorities, necessary infrastructure and heritage issues. The strategic sites include a city centre surface car park to be developed into a mixed used retail and housing scheme.

This set of measures is adopted not just to conserve heritage but to enhance it through careful modernisation and growth. It provides the framework for compact urban growth that strengthens the historic urban fabric and ensures the urban quality of new expansions. But the local strategy includes other important measures to support this. All the strategic development sites will be mixed use, with employment land alongside housing, thus adding diversity and avoiding monofunctional expansion; and consistent conservation policies of recent years that have been widely accepted by local actors, such as the 40ft. height limitation devised to protect the city's character and views, will be kept for the future.

While Salisbury is at an important cross-roads for its future, it has the potential to deal with much of its growth in a sustainable manner and within its boundaries. While pressures for large-scale, homogeneous and detached development will certainly emerge within and around the city, the Core Strategy's approach also looks promising in this respect. There is space for adaptation of the document's targets and locations, namely by giving priority to neighbourhood plans which do not have to be restricted by the higher-tier framework. This type of smaller-scale, often community-led planning is conceived to provide a wider variety of housing types to serve specific populations, encourage innovative low-carbon developments and make use of future opportunities to tackle the chronic housing undersupply of recent years. By doing this, the city may be able to ensure housing quality and affordability, create diverse and attractive places to live and work in new and old urban settings and make sure that the local community identifies with their city's urban growth.



The need to build more and better housing in England is inescapable and growth pressures affect small historic cities in different ways. Current legislation and practices trigger a set of risks for the reconciliation of urban development and heritage preservation – excessive and poorly located urban expansion, failure to provide sufficient housing, little control of urban regeneration and lack of spatial and social quality of expansion areas. We have identified these challenges and shown how we can learn from good practices in historic cities that are managing to accommodate extensive growth and create better cities in the process.

This chapter sets out our policy recommendations to restrict greenfield expansion, improve the liveability of historic centres and urban extensions, bring new developments back into the urban fabric, and integrate whole townscapes into a consistent, desirable and well-connected urban environment.



WORKING WITH EXISTING FRAMEWORKS AND LEGISLATION

Our recommendations

Supporting national frameworks

1 Maintain and where appropriate increase the density of urban centres and rebuild the scale and street pattern of the historic urban fabric by repurposing brownfield sites and filling urban gaps

National Planning Policy Framework 2012 (NPPF)

Ch 2 Ensuring vitality of town centres pg. 23-7

Ch 7 Requiring good design, pg. 56-61

Ch 12 Conserving and enhancing the historic environment, pg. 126-36, 137-8

Plan-making paragraphs 156-7

2 Integrate existing urban fabric and new extensions by selecting growth areas close to the existing city and master planning them with high design quality and public space standards before releasing land

NPPF 2012, pg. 17 Core Planning Principles

Ch 6 Delivering a wide choice of homes, pg. 50-54

Ch 7 Requirement of good design, pg. 56-61

Ch 11 Conserving and enhancing the natural environment pg. 110-12

Ch 12 Conserving and enhancing the historic environment, pg. 126, 128-36

Plan-making pg. 156-7

3 Connect fragmented urban areas by creating transport links and adding new uses and diversity to existing monofunctional areas

NPPF 2012, pg. 7-9 and 17 Core Planning Principles

Ch 2 Ensuring vitality of town centres pg. 23-7

Ch 4 Promoting sustainable transport, pg. 29-32, 35-38

Ch 8 Promoting healthy communities, pg. 69-71

Ch 12 Conserving and enhancing the historic environment pg. 126, 131-6, 137-8

Implementation barriers

Proposed changes to policy

Brownfield sites more difficult to develop than greenfield due to design requirements, environmental constraints, clean-up costs and more complicated valuation	Install system of higher returns on brownfield development and renovation (e.g. lower VAT and a premium level of New Homes Bonus for town centre locations)
Ultimate priority of NPPF is market viability of development	Include small infill plots and building reuse in calculation of housing delivery
Lower than expected housing needs and site allocations can be overridden by central authorities	Extend the local authority powers for land assembly and compulsory purchase, especially for inner-city derelict sites
Fragmented cadastral divisions and ownership increase complexity of land assembly	Implement constructive conservation allowing modernisation and change while encouraging preservation and enhancement of heritage areas
Conservation areas are sometimes too restrictive for heritage modernisation and change	Evaluate the quality of new development by ensuring that the scale of urban forms in new projects is appropriate to the scale of the place
NPPF and government guidance tend to favour market-led growth over local needs and specificities	Exercise greater control over speculative land value change and accommodate profit expectations by promoting higher development density
Centrally-defined policies cascade down and override local authority decisions	Give greater master planning powers to local authorities and secure skilled planning, design and conservation staff
Housebuilders often involved in proposing development sites for allocation into Local Plans	Enable the setting up of local urban development agencies able to acquire, develop and sell land, thereby acquiring the uplift in value
Cheaper and more remote sites are accepted by community in hope of higher planning obligations	Enhance ability of local authority to refuse planning applications if they fail to respond to local vision
Developers can appeal to Planning Inspectorate and override local application refusals	Review handling of appeals to the Secretary of State in case of refused applications Provide better guidelines for inspectors in Local Planning Enquiries and ensure they have the right skills and training
NPPF does not stress need of mixed uses and diversity beyond town centres	Protect existing land uses when important to community, even if of lower value than market-led housing, through 'soft' zoning system regulating planning applications
This core-periphery bias is transferred to Local Plans when planning new growth areas	Negotiate government funding for urban regeneration by adapting City Deals to smaller cities and/or reintroducing Urban Development Corporations
Public transport is not financially viable for very low housing and population densities	Introduce reference in NPPF to the need for mixed uses in all developments and benefit locally complying developers Plan density thresholds for development areas according to public transport financial viability

WORKING WITH EXISTING FRAMEWORKS AND LEGISLATION

Our recommendations

Supporting national frameworks

4 Build upon the distinctive character of each city area and use city marketing tools to brand them equitably, bringing out their specific features appealing to different lifestyles

Localism Act 2011 (neighbourhood planning)

NPPF 2012 Core Planning Principles pg. 17

Ch 6 Delivering a wide choice of homes, pg. 50-51

Ch 8 Promoting healthy communities, pg. 69-71

5 Manage scale, affordability and complexity of development sites to allow community-led schemes and alternative housing models

Community Right to Build (Localism Act 2011)

Affordable Homes Programme (Homes and Communities Agency)

NPPF 2012 Core Planning Principles pg. 17

Ch 6 Delivering a wide choice of homes, pg. 47-51

Plan-making pg. 156-7, Decision-taking pg. 196-7

6 Apply planning obligations to visible and broader community aims for greater public acceptance of development and tangible returns, namely conserving and enhancing surrounding historic environment

Growth and Infrastructure Act 2013

Community Infrastructure Levy Regulations

NPPF 2012 Ch 1 Building a strong, competitive economy pg. 21

Ch 7 Requiring good design, pg. 56-61

Implementation barriers

Proposed changes to policy

Constraints of housing targets and assumptions of market demand make large-scale residential development the only solution	Allow greater flexibility to local authorities in defining development sites and housing delivery models, as innovative offer will create new demand
Neighbourhood planning (Localism Act) ignored if not complying with larger strategy	Work with local institutions to target areas for regeneration and growth and to develop ways to secure community support for development
Master planning often seen as expensive and constraining	Invite 'bids' by developers when releasing development land and choose according to quality of proposals
Local communities often opposed to new development on their settlements	Apply benefits for developers accomodating a greater variety of housing choices Negotiate government funding for pilot projects that can be used to test alternative development models
Large scale greenfield sites for hundreds of dwellings are affordable and manageable only to a handful of national housebuilders	Identify and advertise potential sites and facilitate partnerships between councils, building cooperatives, neighbourhood groups and financiers
Community-led schemes do not have sufficient access to land and money	Work with cross-party support of communities and self-build for the provision of housing
High land and housing prices seen as synonym as successful planning	Link public land for disposal and compulsory purchased land to affordable housing stream and community schemes
Local authorities tend to search for biggest return from their land sales	Increase the use of Local Development Orders to set up pilot areas trying out alternative models
Developing small sites means engaging hundreds of landowners and small profit	When transferring public land to communities divide it into small, affordable plots
Developers are able to renegotiate agreed planning obligations - e.g. affordable housing - due to changing economic conditions	Give councils freedom to negotiate CIL in forms other than financial contribution (e.g. regeneration project, support of mixed uses, etc.)
CIL is calculated as 'blind' financial contributions rather than actual projects with a specific investment and benefits	Calculate compensation values in a way that favours brownfield regeneration Be stricter about changes in planning obligations after permission is given