The aims of the Town and Country Planning Association (the TCPA) are to:

- secure a decent home for everyone, in cohesive, well-designed communities;
- empower communities to influence decisions that affect their future; and
- promote high-quality development through better planning of the use of our land.

We must secure more sustainable patterns of development, offering a better match between the demand for, and the supply of, homes. This is key to ensuring that our regions, cities and towns are economically competitive. To achieve this, we need better plans and a more transparent and simplified planning system based on widespread community engagement.
Urgent Challenges: Clear Choices

2 Our efforts to achieve these aims demand that we address three main challenges facing Britain in the 21st century: climate change, globalisation, and social justice. In tackling all of them, a return to ‘business as usual’ is not an option.

3 Where and how we live, where we work, how we travel and transport goods, how much waste we create and what we do with it – all impact on how we use natural resources that we cannot replace. As a nation, we have decided to reduce our carbon emissions by 80 per cent by 2050, with evidence of real progress by 2020. Therefore, we must develop, and redevelop, our communities with more energy-efficient buildings and more sustainable neighbourhoods. We must make it easier to cycle, walk and use public transport for our journeys to work and to learn. We must use less energy from non-renewable sources and generate less waste. We must not build on land which will be subject to flooding without adequate protection. And we must enhance the natural environment and biodiversity. The TCPA believes that we must plan for the future of our towns and our countryside to address, directly, the challenges arising from climate change.

4 Our prosperity now depends even more on Britain’s links with the rest of the global economy. Capital, labour and ideas now travel the world, with few restrictions. If our cities, towns and villages are attractive places in which to live, learn and work, and places to enjoy as visitors, we will be more successful in this global competition. Again we face a clear choice. Either we will invest in developing, and redeveloping, our communities so that they offer exceptional ‘world class’ places in which to live and work – or we will fail to do so. The TCPA believes that our communities must be attractive for everyone in them – including those creating and working in the knowledge-based industries of the future. If they are not, successful businesses, and their talented staff, will go elsewhere in the world.
Many of us are living longer, often in smaller households, and migrants from elsewhere in the European Union find Britain attractive. As a result, in most communities there are acute shortages of housing. Nationally, we need to plan for the 3 million extra households that will form in the early decades of the 21st century. Britain is now home to a wide mix of ethnic, racial and religious communities. Accessible homes and environments will matter to more and more of the population. Thus, we face the twin challenges of providing more housing overall, and accommodating – and celebrating – our diversity. Our plans for the future of town and country must meet the needs of older people, as well as younger families, the needs of households with incomes ranging from the poorest to the wealthiest, and the needs of black and minority ethnic communities generally. The TCPA believes that we must do this to create a more just society and more cohesive communities.

The TCPA has played a significant role in shaping Britain’s cities, towns, villages and countryside for well over a century. In response to the challenges of the industrial revolution, Ebenezer Howard, our founder, promoted networks of garden cities. He saw the need to limit urban sprawl to maintain our traditional landscape of towns surrounded by a vibrant countryside. Each settlement would provide homes with gardens, accommodate the needs of both the affluent and those on low incomes, and supply enough local jobs to allow many to walk, cycle or take the bus to work. The land values created by the settlement would be re-invested for the benefit of the community as a whole. This model has been replicated throughout the world, often with great success. Re-interpreted for the 21st century, we believe that it will prove as relevant to the reshaping of existing towns as to the creation of new ones.
We now need a new set of aspirations, a new vision, which directly addresses the challenges of climate change, globalisation and social justice. Our new vision – *Towns and Countryside for a New Age of Challenge* – comprises four main elements: choice and diversity; cities and the larger task; a revitalised countryside; and networks of cities, towns and villages.

### Choice, Diversity and Empowerment

In the future, even more than today, our cities and towns must offer a wider range of choices to accommodate the varied needs – and aspirations – of our more diverse population. Families and individuals living alone, old and young, rich and less well-off, those working and those seeking work, and those with disabilities – all have different requirements from their home and community. Our plans to build, and rebuild, our cities and towns must reflect these differences.

Most of us still aspire to a home with a garden. Others – say, young professionals, university students, perhaps some older people – will opt for apartments in neighbourhoods with a distinct ‘urban buzz’. Some like to live in cities like Oxford where cycling is a way of life; others choose to live where a car is essential for most daily trips. Some feel the need to live in communities where their large extended family can live nearby as part of an even larger community with strong religious commitments.

Planning for this diversity is at the heart of our vision for sustainable towns. Yet, in so doing, we must also adhere to a set of common principles. Our cities and towns must offer:
- a ready supply of decent affordable homes for rent
and for sale through a diversity of tenures, generally in mixed, energy-efficient neighbourhoods;
- locations for new jobs which are exceptionally well served by public transport;
- ample and attractive parks, other public open spaces, and allotments;
- quality educational, health, leisure and cultural facilities; and
- safe, frequent public transport, and provision for safe cycling and walking.

**London, Our Cities and the Larger Task**

Renaissance has come to London and our great provincial core cities. Economic change, creating new jobs in the knowledge economy, has underpinned it. But equally important has been a sustained effort by a vibrant planning and housing movement, linked to the diversity and integration of the population. This huge effort – to ensure that all our cities offer to all their inhabitants the principles we espouse – can be seen as a still half-completed task, the more so as we contemplate the impact of a changing climate, which will intensify urban heat islands. In UK cities too much overcrowding goes untackled: too many blocks of under-sized apartments litter the horizon while too few families have access to the gardens, trees and green spaces they increasingly need. The worst affected by this, as by bad housing, are the poorest, for whom hotter summers are already far from manageable and for whom overcrowding has meant the resurgence of diseases such as tuberculosis, long thought to be conquered.

Planning has proved itself capable of meeting such challenges in the past and can do so again. It must deliver better homes, jobs, opportunities and quality of life to urban communities that need them, with efficient public transport within and around cities and better infrastructure. Especially in the hard-pressed urban areas that most urgently need it, good planning must go beyond conservation to enhance local places. In particular, it must protect from rampant market forces those cherished sites that are needed if cultural, community and small business activity is to thrive and grow.

Greening our cities remains central to our manifesto, as it was when Howard declared for London that ‘here the country must invade the town’. We need more trees, gardens, green spaces and more benign energy, transport and other systems that better respect the natural environment and help us to adapt to it, as it protects and supports us – even, if not especially, in the hearts of all our cities. The alternative – of social and environmental exclusion – is not an answer.

**A Revitalised Countryside: Vibrant Market Towns and Villages**

Our vision for sustainable towns goes together with our new vision for a sustainable countryside. Many people aspire to live in a small town or village, and some prefer more remote locations for familiar reasons – attractive environments, tranquillity, and strong
community activity. At the same time the countryside provides basic resources, essential for our future: food, water, and renewable energy. Meanwhile rural communities continue to grow, boasting a wide range of businesses well beyond traditional land-based activities. But these towns and villages often lack the physical and social infrastructure needed to generate better-paid jobs. High housing costs also force away young people and those on lower incomes. Investment will be needed if high-quality specialised education and training, career advice, high-speed broadband, affordable housing and transport are to better match the needs of this growing population in smaller towns and villages. These opportunities, we believe, must be open to all, including key workers and those with strong local roots. Our plans for a more sustainable countryside must focus equally on how best to revitalise existing villages and small towns, and on opportunities to create new highly sustainable villages, towns or town extensions – including exemplar communities.

Finally, our vision embraces a renewed focus on building stronger networks of communities, precisely as Howard proposed over a century ago. Clusters of urban and rural communities, linked by convenient public transport, are a key to sustainable living in the 21st century. This is the best way of providing the extended labour markets that globally competitive companies require and the catchment populations to support better-quality colleges, universities and cultural facilities.
Our efforts to realise our vision of Towns and Countryside for a New Age of Challenge start with the need to promote better development. In many communities, there is fear that any change is undesirable. But such a negative view, based on pure phobia, denies the challenges of climate change, globalisation, social justice and the acute housing shortages facing the nation today.

First, therefore, we need to focus on building a new consensus about the need for responsible high-quality development, so as to ensure that our towns and countryside become progressively more sustainable. This consensus must include a recognition that the increase in land value arising from development should be re-invested for the benefit of the community as a whole.

Second, we see the need to improve the outcomes from town and country planning. We believe that Britain has the best town and country planning legislation in the world. While some legislative reform would be helpful, the real challenge is to improve the performance of government and local authorities. We advocate more devolution of power to democratically elected regional, sub-regional and local authorities, away from unelected bodies. However, we recognise that acting locally will not be enough: the challenge of wider environmental change needs to be addressed at international, national and regional levels. At all levels openness, participation and above all education provide the best guarantees of a local community’s rights and freedoms. We see the need for a national spatial planning framework, stronger regional and particularly sub-regional planning, and far more sensitive local planning.

Third, at the local level, in our plans for the development and redevelopment of cities, towns and villages, we must aim to create communities which are truly distinctive. The places where people live and work intimately shape – and in turn are shaped by – their sense of identity. Britain is a pluralist society, and we see the need to promote local planning policies, and practices, which celebrate this diversity.

Finally, the cornerstone of the TCPA’s work will be educational. In the past the Association was a pioneer in devising planning aid and community involvement. Planning plays a central role in influencing the distribution of all kinds of activity. In future the TCPA will expound both the challenges and the opportunities set out in this manifesto, but in particular the opportunity to build a new consensus for planning better-quality development. As part of this we see the need to simplify the planning system and make it more transparent. Such reforms are necessary to strengthen confidence in planning.

This then is our vision – Towns and Countryside for a New Age of Challenge – and our ideas on how we propose to realise it. If you share our belief in the need to secure a decent home for everyone, to empower communities, and to promote responsible development in the interests of all of us, we invite your contributions to the ongoing work of the Town and Country Planning Association.