

Our shared future – a TCPA White Paper for Homes and Communities

Executive Summary
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**The Lady Margaret
Paterson Osborn Trust**

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About the TCPA

The Town and Country Planning Association (TCPA) works to challenge, inspire and support people to create healthy, sustainable and resilient places that are fair for everyone. To this end we aim to improve the art and science of planning in the UK and abroad and work to secure fresh perspectives on major issues, including planning policy, housing, regeneration and climate change. Informed by the Garden City Principles, the TCPA's strategic priorities are to:

- Work to secure a good home for everyone in inclusive, resilient and prosperous communities, which support people to live healthier lives.
 - Empower people to have real influence over decisions about their environments and to secure social justice within and between communities.
 - Support new and transform existing places to be adaptable to current and future challenges including the climate crisis
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Introduction

A decent and affordable home defines the entire arc of our lives. The home is much more than a simple commodity. It is the foundation of our health and well-being, shaping our life chances as well as our national productivity. Providing a decent home for everyone is the defining test of a civilised society. England is failing that test. We are not building enough homes of the right quality in the right place at the right price.

This paper sets out the practical steps the government must take to transform housing delivery. It complements the TCPA's ongoing work on strategic housing delivery at all scales, providing the detail on how to make a national strategic approach to housing delivery possible and the transformational role of new settlements. Our vision of zero carbon, affordable and healthy homes is underpinned by the Garden City principles which provide a practical framework for a hopeful and sustainable future.

Making this vision a reality requires challenging the orthodox approach of years of failed planning reform which has focused on increasing the number of consents for housing units while ignoring affordability, quality and delivery. If there is single message in this paper it is that we have the design approaches and technical solutions necessary to deliver a fairer and more sustainable future. The challenge is whether we have the political will to implement them.

The case for change

The housing crisis is acute and multi-dimensional. Identifying effective solutions means being clear about the causes. The housing crisis is driven by two key factors: The collapse in investment in socially rented homes; and the government's continued focus on planning consents and planning de-regulation over practical delivery mechanisms. As a nation we have ignored that fact that democratic planning and its ability to coordinate infrastructure, de-risk development and set the right standards of design is the critical solution to housing the nation. Deregulating and defunding planning has made it much harder to build the homes we need.

Demographic changes and the climate, health and biodiversity crises mean the choice for the nation is not whether we build homes but whether we choose to build affordable, zero carbon homes in sustainable locations. This is a choice between human scale, well designed communities, or chaotic urban sprawl and the creation of the slums of the future.

Learning from the past and present

Solving the housing crisis requires a portfolio of solutions. *Our Shared Future* focuses on two core elements: National strategic growth through large-scale new settlements and local strategic growth in smaller new, renewed, and expanded communities.

The case for new settlements led by master developers such as a Development Corporation is powerful and would transform the sustainability and delivery rate and long-term management of places. From the post-war New Towns programme to the eco-towns and Garden Communities – the past provides a wealth of lessons on how to build ambitious new communities while avoiding the creation of unsustainable places. Consistently this highlights the important role of government in enabling and de-risking investment and delivery; of the need for people to be properly involved in decision-making; and the need to ensure the long-term stewardship of places we build.

A national strategic plan for homes

The first element of the solution to the housing delivery crisis is the most ambitious. National strategic growth, in the form of new settlements, provides the opportunity to make a dramatic change in pace of delivery and the quality and affordability of new homes.

Making this a reality means combining a strong vision for fair and sustainable places with the policy, investment, and legislation to make it happen. It means making a long-term commitment to delivery, with up-front, patient investment that de-risks the process for everyone - from investment to delivery. It means enabling and supporting local authorities to have the capacity and resources to lead a democratic local process to determine the detail.

There are preconditions for the success of such a programme. Meeting these preconditions means that the government must address ten key steps:

Step 1: A national vision for new communities

Step 2: A national spatial plan for growth and renewal

Step 3: A built environment work force and supply chain plan

Step 4: Deciding the scale, number and location of new settlements

Step 5: Modernising delivery bodies

Step 6: Supporting local government

Step 7: The designation process

Step 8: Financing the new settlements

Step 9: Defining the operations of the Development Corporation

Step 10: Embedding legacy and stewardship

Local strategic growth

Local strategic growth of between 1,500 and 10,000 new homes will also need to play a major role and has a series of clear advantages for many communities over the kind of fragmented and unsustainable approach to housing provision which is often the outcome of the current system. Some local authorities, such as those in the TCPA New Communities Group, are delivering ambitious projects despite a complex system. With better support these authorities could realise their ambition to be exemplars of sustainability.

National government has a crucial role to play in providing the confidence and certainty to enable local action. This requires a fairer balance of the financial and political risks between local and national government. Developing a comprehensive support programme for local strategic growth is essential.

There is one overarching constraint on the potential of local growth and that is the long-term impact of defunding the planning service on the skills and capacity vital to effective planning and delivery. Rebuilding strategic planning skills will take time and requires national government to address both adequate funding and a workforce plan to rebuild the knowledge and confidence of the public service.

Making it happen

This paper has advocated a fundamental shift in housing and planning policy to focus on the effective delivery of homes, particularly for those in greatest need. In scanning across the range of planning measures necessary to meet this challenge we have advocated a decisive shift towards a programme of new and expanded communities both at a national strategic level in the form of new towns, and the enabling of local strategic growth. While investors, infrastructure providers and local government all have a contribution to this programme, the key responsibility for unlocking housing delivery sits squarely with national government. Its role is not to impose but rather to enable delivery by creating the preconditions for success. This includes the creation of a national spatial plan and a commitment to invest in the large-scale expansion of socially rented homes.

This nation was once a world-leader in creating high quality homes. That was based on a vision of high-quality homes in complete communities for everyone. There is opportunity to renew that vision to give hope to future generations. We have the skills and the understanding of the lessons of the past. What we are lacking is the political will to achieve long-term change.

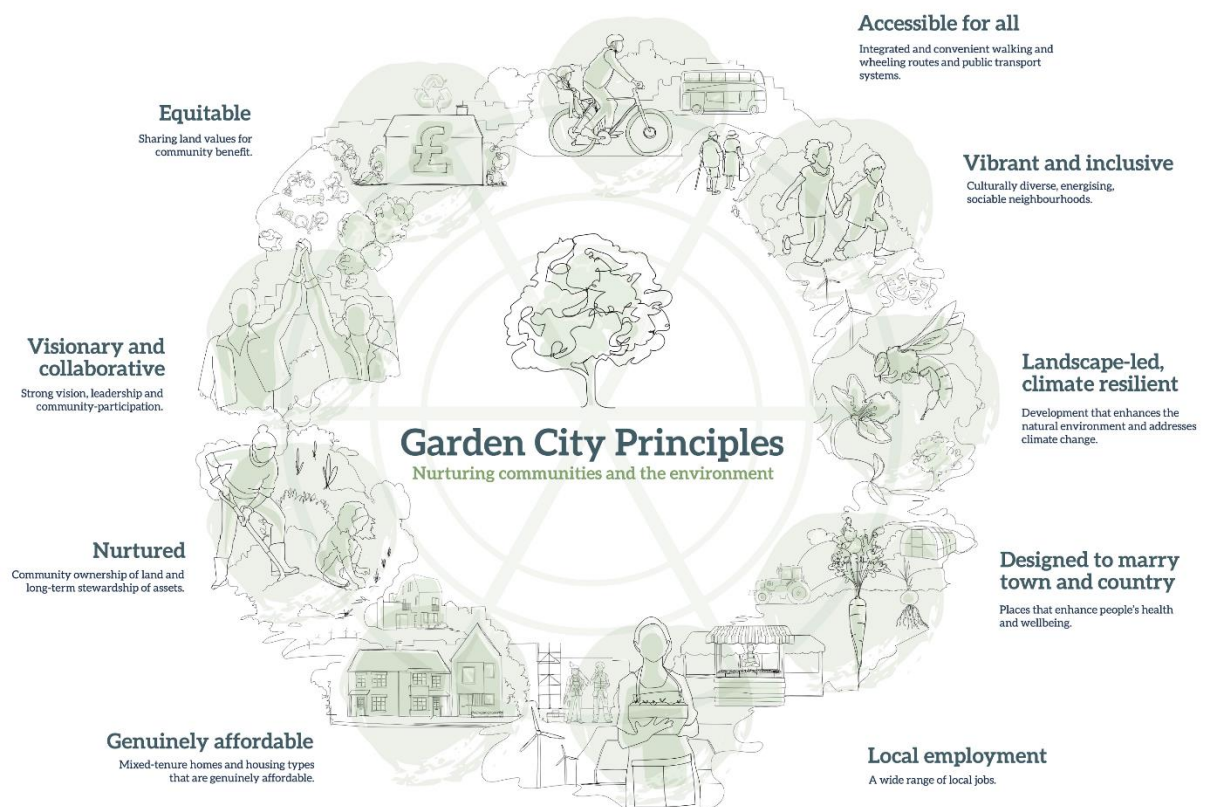


Figure 1: The Garden City Principles. Further details about the Garden City Principles can be found at: <https://www.tcpa.org.uk/garden-city-principles/>