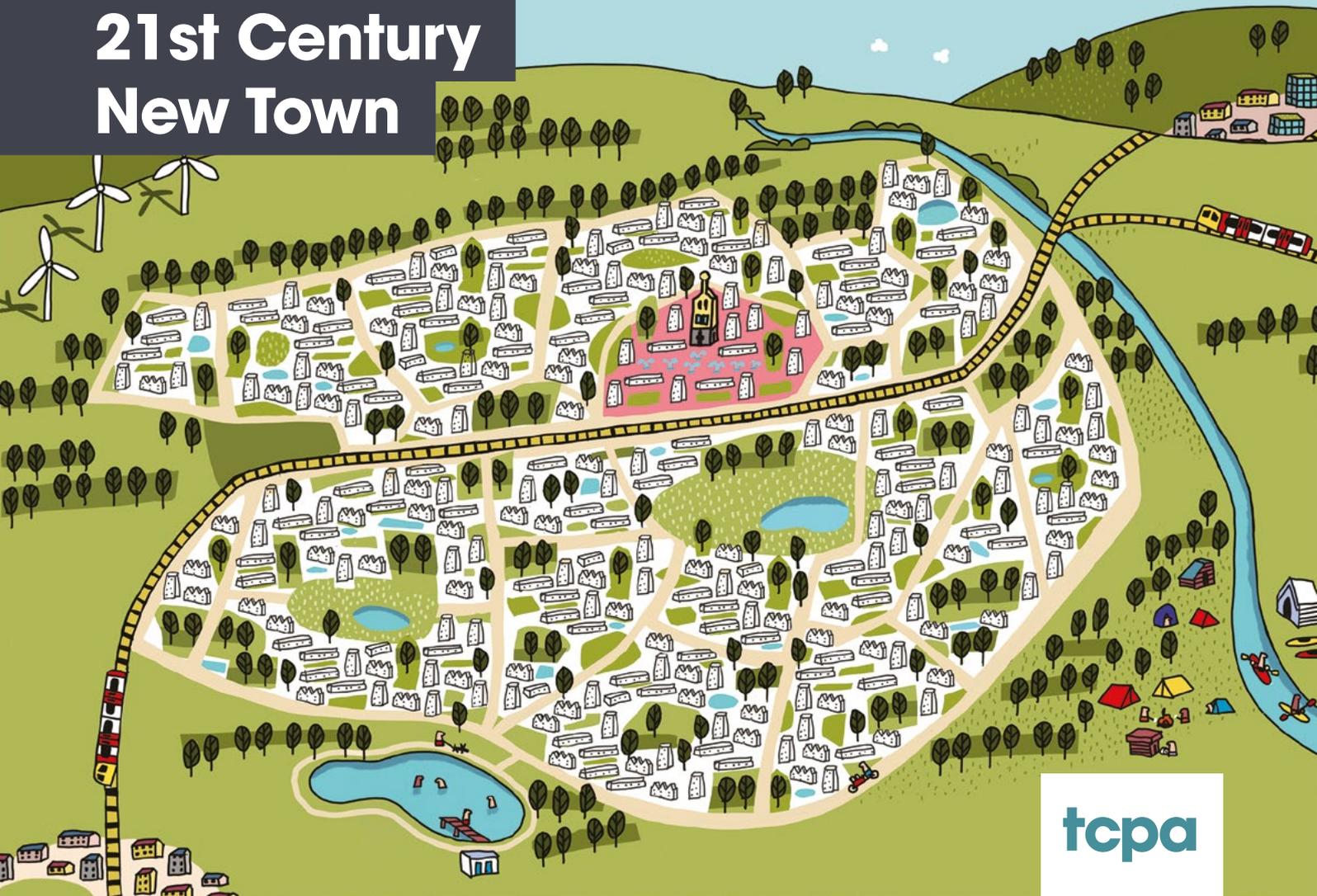


21st Century New Town



▣ **Foreword by Pam Warhurst**
CBE, Founder of Incredible Edible

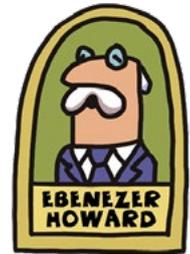
For me, building a new town is really an act of hope. When you strip away all the technical detail which government and planners love to talk about, you're left with a simple question: will these places offer the next generation a chance of the good life? For that, we need a vision of places which allow us to connect with each other and with nature. And our voice needs to be heard in conversations about where and how they are built. What you're about to read gives just a glimpse of the kind of positive vision that must be at the heart of the next generation of new towns.

Why have a new town?

The government has committed to building the first large-scale new communities in England for sixty years, giving us a once in a generation chance to develop differently and better. The Garden Cities and post-war new towns were ambitious, visionary places, designed for thriving communities with affordable social housing. They transformed

people's living conditions and offered valuable lessons for building to meet people's needs. Because their scale allows us to plan well from the outset, new towns give us a chance to unite the needs of people for a vibrant work and social life while reconnecting us with the natural world. Using the public sector to oversee delivery allows the increasing land values to be reinvested in the services people need.

As a nation, we have the expertise to create thriving towns which promote health and accessibility, mitigate against climate change, and provide opportunities for art, culture, and fun. What we need is the political commitment to turn this into a reality. The TCPA remains committed to the Garden City model, and this very human vision of the good life sets the context for our aspirations for 21st Century new towns. We hope this vision helps communities think about what they want from new towns and to fight for the standards which will secure a hopeful and thriving life for future generations.

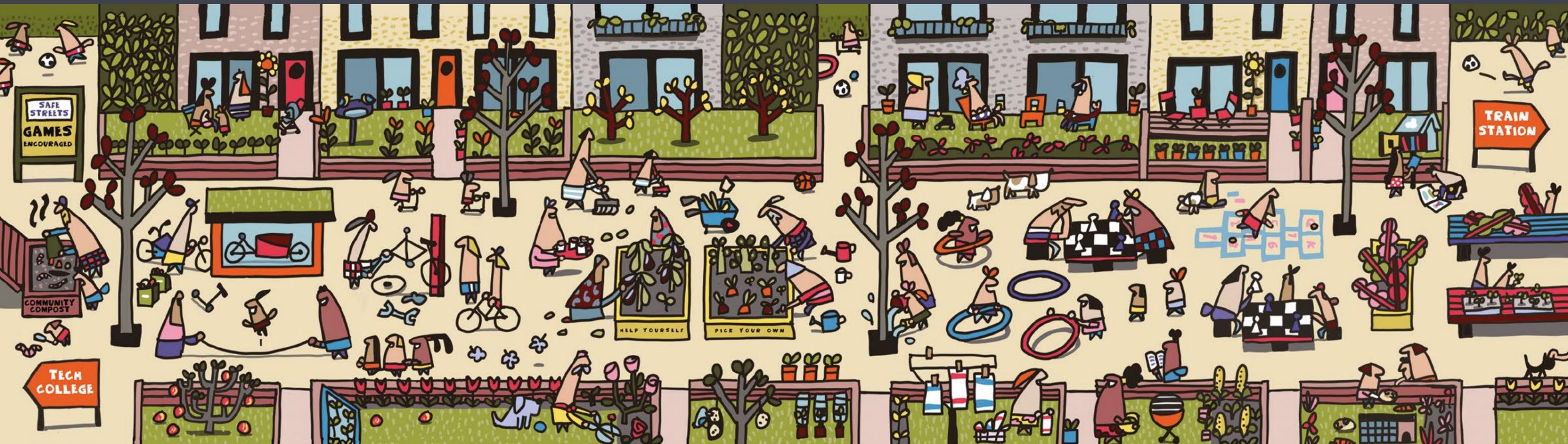


📌 Where will we build?

New communities of more than 10,000 homes will have a big impact wherever they end up. The location can't just be pulled out of a hat in Whitehall; the locations must be based on a respectful conversation between existing communities and the national government. Designating these places must include the people's voice through a plan examination or public inquiry. It's also vital that they are based on the most up-to-date evidence on issues like flood risk and biodiversity, and they are well-connected to surrounding communities. If they are big extensions to existing places, it is key that they have a plan for the whole town, so existing communities also benefit.

New towns must also fit into a wider vision for England, which reflects a more balanced approach to development. Focusing all of the growth in the already congested Southeast cannot be the whole picture.





How can we pay for this?

When land is allocated for development, the value of that land increases substantially. Currently, most of that value goes to landowners, but in a comprehensively planned new community led by the public sector, more of that wealth can be shared with the public. Our existing new towns used this approach and proved to be highly profitable enterprises. But unlocking this value does require upfront loans to pay for land and development. Without significant investment from the government, new towns will fail. The big lesson is that new towns can pay back these debts and go on financing their own renewal.

How do we deliver this?

Public Development Corporations (DCs) were key to the success of the new towns, and a new generation of towns will not succeed without this model. DCs are public bodies with the power to do everything necessary to deliver a new community. Unlike our existing planning system, they can coordinate all aspects of strategy and delivery. Private firms would still build much of the town and benefit from the certainty that comprehensive planning can guarantee. But the DC would ensure that developers build to the right standard and at the right pace. The DC can also create the space for other builders: from small businesses to housing cooperatives and self-build.

DCs are clearly the best way forward in the delivery of new towns, but they require modernisation to make them fit for the 21st century. They need to be focused on planning for health and wellbeing, climate resilience, net zero and long-term stewardship. They must enable greater community participation and be accountable to the residents of the new community.

People's Voice

Towns are built for people, and they must be shaped by those people. The surrounding communities and new residents must be engaged as they will play a vital role in the new towns' look, feel and management. Development corporations are responsible for building and strengthening the people's voice by creating inclusive and transparent models of decision-making. Communities are an incredible asset to the design and management of places, and they should be encouraged and enabled to use their voice and to set up community-owned services and housing.

Better with age

Building a new town takes care and commitment, but maintaining its public assets is equally important. Unlike the expensive and often hidden costs of private management agreements, new towns offer the opportunity for a comprehensive stewardship approach that works with and for the community. We have found the best models manage the stewardship of the whole place under a single charitable organisation. This is simple for residents and means profit is not extracted from the maintenance of public spaces. Stewardship organisations must be underpinned by community engagement, so they are accountable to those they serve.



The People's New Town

What will a new town look and feel like?

We are confident about the benefits of large-scale new communities, but to ensure these places are healthy, resilient, accessible, harmonious, vibrant and fun, we need to build a shared vision. We hope you can use our vision for a new town to help build your own. Start by being ambitious about what your ideal place would look and feel like.

Imagining better lives.

So, what should all this mean for a citizen of a new town?

You will live in a home you can afford, which will be warm and secure and powered by renewable energy from a local energy cooperative. It will have decent-sized rooms with space to eat your dinner at a table, somewhere for the kids to do their homework and enough storage for life's necessities. Your home will either have its own garden or access to a shared garden or an allotment, providing space to grow your own food. If you have children, they will be able to play out on a safe street surrounded by green space and trees because the needs of pedestrians will come before cars. Your home will be flexible to fit your changing needs. You will have a choice to live in an accessible home, in a housing cooperative, or to build your own home.

You will be able to walk to the local school and corner shop, so buying a pint of milk will also keep you fit. Your neighbourhood will be rich with wildlife; development will enhance nature, not destroy it. There will be a community cafe and shared workspace.

There'll be places to meet and spaces for solitude. Places for sport and art, and festivals in the local park. The neighbourhood you live in will be resilient to a changing climate, and sustainable drainage will create even more space for wildlife. The assets of the neighbourhood will be held in a community trust to help fund the maintenance of parks and play spaces over the long term.¹

We cannot and should not force people to live in certain ways, but we can create the conditions which enable people now and, in the future, to choose peaceful and flourishing lives. The future holds extraordinary opportunities for a better life for all of us. All we need to do is reach out and take it. We know we can achieve it, but we need you to join us, to be hopeful, be ambitious, be angry, be loud, and demand better.

¹ Adapted from K Henderson & H Ellis: Rebuilding Britain: Planning for a Better Future. Polity Press, 2014



Wayfinding

Neighbourhoods are designed at a human scale and are imaginative and distinctive with landmarks and views that create a sense of place. Calm streets with bike lanes, seating and clear signposting make spaces safe and enjoyable to use.



For all

Spaces are accessible and inclusive to different cultures, ages and abilities.



Transport

Active transport is the most attractive option, and all daily needs are met within neighbourhoods. Public transport options and bike paths link neighbourhoods and surrounding areas. It's easy to take trips using multiple modes of transport, including through secure bike parking at transport stops. Bike and cargo-bike hire, and car hire open up access to all and make car-ownership optional.



Food

Neighbourhoods provide a diverse range of healthy and affordable shops and restaurants. Public spaces will incorporate space and hookups for markets and food vendors.

Growing spaces and fruit trees provide a greater connection to our food, and outdoor cooking, community kitchens, and picnic areas will enable social cooking and dining.



Art and Culture

Flexible facilities for formal and informal art and culture are provided, including museums and galleries; music venues, studios and rehearsal spaces; theatres and cinemas; sports facilities; murals and sculptures; and festivals.



Working and Learning

Diverse employment and learning opportunities are located close to homes, including technical training, libraries, co-working spaces, affordable commercial spaces and live-work units.



Community

The development corporation will drive development, but as the community matures, it should be increasingly co-operatively designed, delivered and managed, and participatory democracy is a key part of life. Community groups are enabled and encouraged to take ownership of services and stewardship. Community event spaces and informal meeting places enable connections to be forged. Information on the town, activities, and the surrounding area is provided to residents.

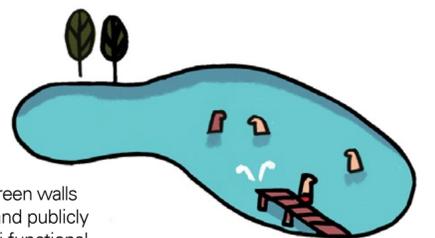
Play

The town is fun and vibrant with opportunities for play for all ages and abilities. The design is uplifting and welcoming, encouraging interaction with nature, people and your own sense of play.



Nature

Buildings and spaces are net-zero, efficient and resilient. Community-owned energy supplies enable the town to be energy positive and offer an income stream for the stewardship of community assets. Spaces are designed to reduce the risk of flooding, overheating/cooling, and drought. Green infrastructure makes up 50% of the town, including green walls and roofs, sustainable drainage, private and shared gardens, and publicly accessible parks and forests. This forms a network of multi-functional, well-managed, and high-quality open space that is well used by residents and provides habitats for wildlife.



Health and Wellbeing

Cohoused health hubs provide the services communities need within their local area, with additional space for community gathering and organisations. Public spaces and homes are comfortable, stimulating and therapeutic, creating a healing environment.



Homes

Spacious and well-planned homes which are accessible, resilient, flexible and efficient. With space to cook and eat, study, store, wash and dry clothes. Homes meet the TCPA Healthy Homes Principles and sustainability standards e.g. Passivhaus. Homes are innovative but sensitive to the local context, they are constructed from local and sustainable materials, utilising modern methods of construction. Homes are affordable and flexible to different and changing needs, residents have a choice of home including co-operative housing, self-build and community land trusts.

➤ **Ebenzer Howard, founder of the Garden City Movement wrote this about the challenge of building a new community.**



For the vastness of the task which seems to frighten some of my friends, represents, in fact, the very measure of its value to the community, if that task be only undertaken in a worthy spirit and with worthy aims.



tcpa



Illustrations by Lisa Holdcroft