Department for
**Communities and
Local Government**

Transferable
Lessons from
the New Towns

housing

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the New Towns*

CONTENTS

Executive Summary

This report presents the main findings from an extensive review of the literature dealing with the English New Towns (NT) programme.

Map 1: New Towns

1st Generation (1946 – 1951)
1   Basildon
2   Bracknell
3   Corby
4   Crawley
5   Harlow
6   Hatfield
7   Hemel Hempstead
8   Newton Aycliffe
9   Peterlee
10 Stevenage
11 Welwyn Garden City

2nd Generation (1961 - 1964)
12 Redditch
13 Runcorn
14 Skelmersdale
15 Telford
16 Washington

3rd Generation (1966 - 1970)
17 Central Lancashire
18 Milton Keynes
19 Northampton
20 Peterborough
21 Warrington

● New Town

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0   25   50   100   Kilometres

The purpose of the research was to identify lessons from the NT programme that might be transferable to the Growth Areas initiative. The main assumption is that the lessons derived from the literature on the New Towns can be used as a starting point for both policy and practice for the Growth Areas (See Map 2 Growth Areas). Although these are clearly very different initiatives, they both involve development of essentially new settlements on a very large scale. Indeed, the Growth Areas will be the largest programme of state Government sponsored development since the New Towns.

Map 2: Growth Areas

Growth Areas
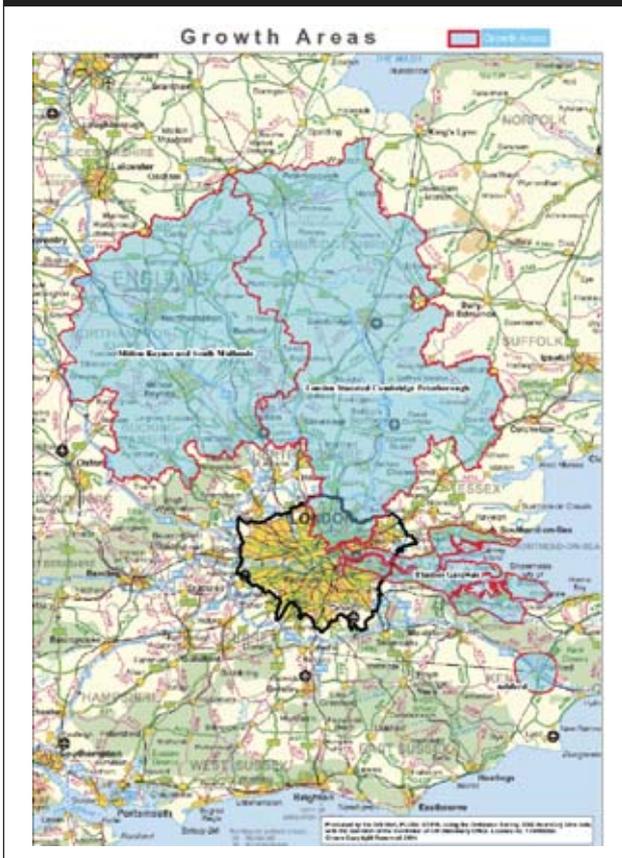
The research identified over 2000 articles, books, and other published sources specifically referring to the New Towns. From this around 200 sources have been reviewed to see what answers they might provide to a series of questions supplied by the ODPM under eight main themes:

Delivery
Finance
Creating Communities
Governance
Economic Achievement and Competitiveness
Physical Environment and Design
Long-term Sustainability
End user experience

One key finding from this extensive literature review has been that there is, in fact, very little research-based material relating to the New Towns programme *as a whole*, which, arguably, is both objective and useful. There are some notable exceptions; but the team were surprised by this lack of quality in the literature. This is undoubtedly due to the fact that the NTs programme has never been reviewed systematically.

Moreover, none of the literature, particularly the research articles, was written to address questions of transferability to a new context – although some sources do explicitly draw out lessons for the future. Recognising this, we have treated our sources in their own terms whilst attempting to extrapolate from them conclusions that night reasonably apply to the new context of the Growth Areas.

Aim of the study

The aim has been to identify, where possible, evidence-based findings from previous research and published experience, and from this to draw out key lessons relating to specific questions under each theme. These are fully set out in the themed sections in the report.

Our brief has been to draw conclusions from the New Towns experience that can inform policy and implementation of the Growth Areas strategy. It is, of course, the case that as this strategy develops further questions may emerge which might require either an additional review of the literature, or new primary research. This report also makes recommendations about such additional questions, and identifies gaps in the primary research relating to the themes listed above.

It must be stressed that the study is equally concerned with both positive and negative transferable lessons i.e. evidence of what did and didn't work is of equal importance to this research.

Method

The research approach has been entirely desk-based, relying on a comprehensive gathering together of research-based and grey literature, a review of this under the highlighted themes, and an extrapolation from this of transferable lessons.

Literature was identified from a wide range of electronic and other bibliographical data sources. This material was then reviewed through a number of stages to identify a core set of texts that were evidence-based, or synthesised in some way evidence from other sources, and which dealt with the New Towns as a programme, or had implications for the New Towns as a whole with respect to potentially transferable lessons. The material was read by a panel of experts at Oxford Brookes University in order to address the questions proposed by the client; and on the basis of this interpretation the analysis and conclusions in the form of transferable lessons was produced.

The draft report containing this material was made available to a number of external reviewers whose views have been taken on board in the full final report.

Findings

The findings from the research are presented in the report in the form of over 60 transferable lessons, a number for each theme. These are presented with a brief observation about their relative significance and whether they imply an action or simply some acknowledgement as a background condition or factor that might inform future planning decisions for the Growth Areas. A second set of findings are presented as an identification of gaps in the evidence base, and as topics for possible future research. It is our view, for example, that the present research might be complemented by a further desk-based review, specifically of literature in three areas:

1. other types of large scale development – the Expanded Towns, and new towns outside of the New Towns Programme in England.

2. New Towns internationally.

3. comparison with other towns sharing the same regional, context.

In addition, we recommend a further study that pulls together current best-practice in terms of development.

Application of the present research

If the lessons contained in this report are to be applied, those charged with applying them may need some training or guidance – on an area by area basis. This would serve two purposes: first to ensure the lessons are properly understood; and second to provide an opportunity for the Growth Area teams to raise issues specific to their own development, planning, finance and locational contexts.

1. Introduction

1.1 Introduction

This report presents findings from a review of the literature dealing with the UK government's programme to develop 32[1] statutory New Towns under the 1946 and subsequent New Towns Acts. It focuses on the following themes:

1. *Delivery*
2. *Finance*
3. *Creating Communities*
4. *Governance*
5. *Economic Achievement and Competitiveness*
6. *Physical Environment and Design*
7. *End user experience*
8. *Long-term Sustainability*

It is based on a brief produced by and agreed with the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister.

The research approach has been entirely desk-based, relying on a comprehensive collection of research-based and 'grey' literature. This has been reviewed under the highlighted themes, and an extrapolation from this to transferable lessons.

The objective has been to identify, where possible, evidence-based findings from previous research and published experience, and distilling key lessons relating to specific questions under each theme. These are fully set out in the themed sections later in the report.

Our purpose has been to draw conclusions from the New Towns experience that can inform policy and implementation of the Growth Areas strategy. As this strategy develops, further questions will emerge which will require either an additional review of the literature, or new primary research. Based upon desk research of the New Towns literature, this report makes recommendations about such additional questions, and identifies gaps in the primary research relating to the eight themes listed above.

1.2 Structure of the report

The report is divided into a number of sections:

- Summary of client's brief.

- Background summary of the New Towns programme.

- Discussion of likely areas of transfer.

- Research method.

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1   Map 1: Only 28 of the New Towns as it excludes Northern Ireland.

- Findings for each theme, including:

  - brief discussion of findings from the literature relating to the theme and its sub-questions;

  - summary lessons for each main theme;

  - identification of gaps in the literature/knowledge;

  - identification of further research questions for each theme.

- Conclusions discussing the next stage of the research.

It should be noted at the outset that the research has taken the client's research questions as a starting point for an interrogation of the literature. However, it has also sought to make sense of these in so far as the literature itself, combined with our understanding of the emerging Growth Areas policy and strategy, has produced a new 'steer' and different emphases.

2. Summary of client's brief

The aim of this research is to provide the basis for advice and evidence to the Growth Areas teams based upon transferable lessons identified through a thematic examination of the New Towns programme. Specific objectives in achieving this are to:

a. Undertake a comprehensive literature review of existing publications on New Towns covering themes relevant to Growth Areas policy and identifying key transferable lessons.

b. Provide recommendations based upon evidence from the literature review for the main focus of further primary research identifying transferable lessons from New Towns for Growth Areas (carried out as a separate research undertaking).

The study is equally concerned with both positive and negative transferable lessons i.e. evidence of what did and didn't work well is of equal importance to this review.

3. The context – New Towns and the Growth Areas

3.1 The New Towns

The 32 New Towns created in the UK from 1946 represent one of the major programmes of post-war planning. Eleven were created in the south east or in neighbouring regions but to serve the needs of the wider capital region. Of the remainder, six were in central Scotland, four in the north west, three in the north east, three in Northern Ireland, two in Wales, two in the west midlands and one in the east midlands. In total, the overall growth planned to occur in the New Towns (when their planned targets were at their maximum extent in the mid-1970s) added up to about two million people. By 1991 actual growth amounted to only 1.4 million, though the New Towns planned for the capital region had achieved 90 per cent of their planned growth. Growth of some New Towns has continued since 1991.

The New Towns were designated mainly in two phases, from 1946-50, when most of the London overspill New Towns were begun, and from 1961-70, when most of the provincial New Towns were designated. They had in common the statutory mechanism used to develop them, involving the creation of an appointed public corporation serving each New Town that had extremely strong powers as a delivery vehicle. Most New Towns also benefited by a restructuring of local government, so they had either a local authority that was coterminous with the New Town or one that avoided fragmenting the New Town area.

The classic image of the New Town, deriving from the Greater London Plan 1944, was as an essentially 'statist' mechanism to facilitate the overspill of population from congested metropolitan areas onto green field sites containing only a modest degree of previous settlement. An entirely new urban structure could therefore be created. Yet this image captures only part of the New Town experience. There were also New Towns designated to facilitate the large scale expansion of already large urban areas. These raised rather different planning and development considerations as compared with less developed locations. Their growth process also needed more sensitive management, paying greater heed to established communities.

Nor was metropolitan overspill the only rationale. Regional economic development objectives were important in many provincial examples, involving brown field development in some cases. There was even one instance of a small New Town created for rural development purposes. (It should also be noted that there were a few post-war examples of substantially new settlements developed entirely outside the New Towns programme by local authorities in conjunction with private developers, as at Cramlington in Northumberland).

Within the New Towns programme itself, there were also important variations over time. Generally, the role of the private sector in achieving development grew, especially so in New Towns in the most prosperous parts of the country and everywhere after the Thatcher Conservative government was elected in 1979. There were also major changes in the housing tenure patterns of the New Towns. Initially most New Town residents were development corporation tenants, though owner occupation began to grow from the late 1960s as private house builders sought and were given a bigger role and as right to buy legislation was introduced in the early 1970s and, especially, from 1980.

For all these geographical and temporal variations, certain common features were apparent in their planning and development. This was especially so in the first phase, launched with very specific guidance from central government. Much greater diversity was apparent in the planning of the later towns, however. A common feature throughout was, though, the great prestige they garnered within professional circles. As a result they attracted high calibre appointees to run them, staff to work for them and consultants to undertake commissions for them. Moreover, as the most prestigious planned projects of their day, they also attracted a great deal of professional and academic attention, inspiring an immense amount of published material, of varying utility.

3.2 Research work on the New Towns

The New Towns programme grew directly out of the pre-1945 garden city movement, responsible for the foundation of Letchworth (1903) and Welwyn Garden City (1919)[2]. The New Towns programme, especially in its early years, displayed much continuity with the garden cities. Not least, their experimental character fostered a strong tradition of recording, monitoring and evaluating development that was subsequently extended to the New Towns programme.

With relatively few (though significant) exceptions, the great bulk of published research material on the New Towns dates from the 'heyday' period, prior to about 1977-8, when there was a decisive shift in national urban policy towards the inner cities. In this heyday, a good deal of the published research material on the New Towns essentially took the form of ongoing reports on their 'progress'. Much of this originated in the annual reports of the individual New Town development corporations. Though not directly produced by the development corporations, there are also many practice-based accounts by officials involved in various fields of New Towns policy. These often constitute the most substantial extant material on financial and administrative matters.

Reports and accounts produced by 'insider' agencies or individuals were then recycled and synthesised in many academic and professional works of the time, with varying degrees of independent commentary. Many of the standard general sources on the New Towns, some of which are of high quality, adopted the essentially positive tone of the official reports. The main example here is Osborn and Whittick, which became the standard reference source on the UK New Towns from its first appearance in 1963. Some of the better international accounts of this period show more independence in the questions asked but these too rely largely on the same knowledge base, created essentially by the 'insiders'. There was scarcely any really dispassionate, critical investigation of larger questions, at least in the public domain.

From about the mid to late 1960s, however, there was a significant and growing volume of more independent, reflective research. Though sometimes commissioned by official agencies, this was less dominated by the flow of information from 'inside' New Town sources and also moved beyond relatively short term practice-related matters. Typified by the work of Heraud, Thomas or Cullingworth and Karn (1968), it focused mainly on what were seen as key social and economic objectives, especially in the early London New Towns. This work typically dealt with issues such as the extent of commuting from and to the New Towns and the degree of employment 'self-containment' or 'social balance'.

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2   Welwyn Garden City subsequently became a New Town under the 1946 Act.

Generally, though it was critical of some aspects, this kind of research supported the worthiness and viability of these New Town ideals, suggesting refinements rather than rejection of the programme. The later 1960s also saw officially commissioned research on the fundamental question of the costs of developing entirely New Towns as compared to other ways of accommodating growth. However these research findings, supporting the long term cost advantages of entirely New Towns, proved politically controversial and did not become public until 1973, six years after the original research report was presented (Stone, 1973; Wannop, 1999).

As a more critical policy climate began to emerge during the mid-1970s, the general tenor of research also began to change. An important marshalling of research evidence and opinion on the New Towns question at this time was the lengthy investigation by the House of Commons Expenditure Committee in 1974-5. By the late 1970s, there were also more substantial independent and reflective research accounts (the most notable being that by Aldridge, 1979) and a definitive central government official history (Cullingworth, 1979).

Since then very little research indeed has been published about the New Towns. The flow of material from the individual development corporations continued almost from the grave as they published their own official historical accounts as they were wound up. These are of varying research quality but most are unapologetically hagiographic in tone, similar in style to self-published company histories. In the recent years there have been occasional new research publications which mention the New Towns, largely in response to evolving policy debates. However the fresh research they contain is largely couched in the new policy language of 'new settlements' rather than being about the statutory New Towns themselves.

The most important 'research' to appear recently is actually more an information source than a body of new research. This is the New Towns Record prepared on behalf of the Commission for the New Towns and the relevant Scottish and Northern Ireland Departments. First issued in 1997 and revised in 2004, it takes the form of a DVD which collects together a very large amount of material of varying types about the New Towns. It also includes more reflective recent accounts by policy 'insiders', together with perspectives of those who have lived in and grown up in the New Towns. Though by no means exhaustive, especially regarding more critical perspectives, it does provide a very important resource for the present research.

3.3 Lesson-drawing from the New Towns

As the House of Commons Select Committee on Transport, Local Government and the Regions observed in 2002, the New Towns programme constitutes the most important source of previous lessons regarding large scale planned urban growth. In considering what these lessons might be for the present Growth Areas, it is likely that these will include both positive and negative examples. Yet it is also obvious from the outset that certain lessons will simply not be transferable, or can only be partially transferred. The context is now quite different with far greater reliance from the outset on private developers to deliver growth.

In these circumstances, it now seems unlikely that the blueprint, fixed end-state master planning approach which was so typical of many New Towns will be as relevant. There will clearly need to be far more emphasis on flexibility, a quality which was becoming apparent in plans for the later New Towns. On the other hand, the bold and emblematic quality of all the New Town plans, blueprint or flexible, undoubtedly played a key part in creating their identities and promoting their images. This quality remains something that can usefully be retained within the Growth Areas programme.

This sense of partial transferability applies also to other topics. Like any large scale areas of growth, the New Towns obviously faced major problems of infrastructure provision and, in some cases, land reclamation before development could proceed on the ground. The key difference then was that these were resolved by public finance (even though only a small part of this actually came from the New Town Development Corporations themselves). The private sector role in infrastructure provision, whether by developers or the now privately-owned public utilities, will obviously be much greater in the Growth Areas. Yet the greater reliance on public expenditure in the New Towns posed its own problems and sometimes clearly needed great resilience and persistence on the part of those responsible for securing it from central government or other public bodies. Although their efforts will be differently targeted, those responsible for delivering the Growth Areas will clearly need to display similar qualities in championing the infrastructure needs of their own areas.

However, it seems quite possible that many lessons will be directly transferable. The checklist provided in the brief gives an important template for considering how such lessons may be drawn, though a few other aspects can also be suggested. In the field of place marketing the New Towns may be considered as pioneers of what has subsequently become a widespread practice. The effectiveness with which some of them adapted to the post-1977 policy climate in part appears to reflect their marketing approach, continuing to promote a holistic place identity instead of just the more fragmented concerns of individual developers.

The substantial expansion of already large urban areas may create special governance issues, though these are likely to be comparable to those experienced in the major expansion New Towns (Peterborough, Northampton etc).

3.4 Sustainable communities: Growth Areas policies and programmes

This emerged from the Communities Plan which was unveiled in early 2003. Amongst much else, this Plan identified four major areas to accommodate large amounts of additional housing growth:

- An enlarged and re-energised version of the Thames Gateway growth strategy.

- A wide area around Milton Keynes and the South Midlands.

- A much smaller area around Ashford.

- An area along the London-Stansted-Cambridge corridor, since extended to include Peterborough.

Strong support has been expressed (from, for example, the Crow report, 1999) in the Examination in Public for the strategic planning guidance for the south east, and key opinion formers such as Town and Country Planning Association (President, Sir Peter Hall) for the designation of New Town Development Corporations and Urban Development Corporations. The ODPM indicated in its Action Programme that three broad types of delivery vehicle would be used to drive the growth process:

- non-statutory implementation partnership bringing together key stakeholders;

- Urban Regeneration Companies (URCs) bringing together the powers and funding of English Partnership, the RDA and the relevant local authorities;

- new style local development bodies that use the powers of the Urban Development Corporations\New Towns. These will operate with the full involvement of local partners.

So far the following Local Delivery Vehicles/Local Regeneration Partnerships have been established in the Growth Areas:,

In the Thames Gateway:

- Development Corporations have been established in Thurrock and London – Thurrock Thames Gateway Development Corporation (TTGDC) and London Thames Gateway Development Corporation (LTGDC). Both have also been granted strategic planning powers;

- Seven local partnerships currently operate in the other parts of the Gateway.

In Milton Keynes and South Midlands:

- Milton Keynes Partnership, a committee of English Partnerships, has been established. It has statutory planning powers in the designated expansion areas of Milton Keynes.

- The Government has provisionally approved (subject to the outcome of current local consultation) the merger of Catalyst Corby, an URC, with North Northants Together, a local partnership vehicle.

- In West Northamptonshire an UDC has been established – West Northamptonshire Development Corporation

- A non-statutory local partnership has been established in the Bedford location – Renaissance Bedford

- A Company Limited by Guarantee in Aylesbury – Aylesbury Vale Advantage.

In London-Stansted-Cambridge-Peterborough:

- Cambridgeshire Horizons, a Company Limited by Guarantee set up by the Cambridgeshire Local Authorities; and

- Opportunity Peterborough – a URC for the Peterborough sub region.

In Ashford, a non-statutory local partnership has been established – Ashford's Future.

3.5 New Towns and Growth Areas: The potential for transferable lessons

In a *theoretical* sense it is possible to identify many lessons from the New Towns programme, though this does not mean that all these lessons are necessarily *transferable* to the present Growth Areas programme. This section uses the team's findings about research on the New Towns and currently published reports about the Growth Areas to identify some broader similarities and differences between the two programmes that, in our judgement, may have a bearing on the degree to which lessons *should* (or indeed *can*) be transferred.

Points of obvious (though not unconditional) similarity include the following:

1. The scale of growth contemplated is comparable but there is, to date, no suggestion that entirely freestanding new settlements should be created in the Growth Areas (except, in line with local planning policies, perhaps around Cambridge).

2. In several cases (Basildon, Milton Keynes, Northampton, Corby, Harlow, Peterborough) former New Towns are actually affected.

3. There is a recognition that ordinary local planning agencies are in most cases inadequate on their own to deliver major growth.

4. Development Corporations are being used in some areas but none have been identified as New Town Development Corporations (NTDCs). (This is despite NTDCs being used in exactly similar circumstances to facilitate the expansion of Peterborough, Northampton, Warrington and Central Lancashire from the late 1960s.).

5. Though today's language differs, the emphasis on creating sustainable communities and accommodating social mix has strong echoes of the New Town ideals of self-containment and social balance.

6. There are likely to be comparable problems of major infrastructure provision which will be critical before large scale development can proceed.

7. It seems likely that some degree of master planning will be required, which in the New Towns played a key role in establishing image and place identity.

8. Place marketing is likely to be an important consideration in Growth Areas as it was in the New Towns.

There are some important contrasts which will limit the possibilities of lesson transferability:

1. The NTDCs were unelected nationalized corporations charged with developing a town. They were directly appointed and had strong land acquisition powers. The UDCs share some of these characteristics but will not be operating in areas otherwise most comparable to the New Towns.

2. The New Towns programme was supported by both Labour and Conservative governments over a long period. The extent of bipartisan political support for the Growth Areas programme more generally has not yet been tested.

3. The NTDCs largely operated in a climate of high state spending at a time when there was a stronger belief in public sector enterprise and investment. They were themselves major developers.

4. In particular the NTDCs were landlords of large amounts of housing. This had major advantages in ensuring housing affordability and obviously played a role in getting major development underway relatively quickly.

5. It seems likely that the Growth Areas will involve a higher ratio of "brownfield: greenfield" development compared to the New Towns (though there is, admittedly, no systematic research evidence about this for the latter). The delivery mechanisms that are most similar to the NTDCs are being created for Growth Areas which have large brownfield areas.

6. Though some New Towns included areas of significant industrial dereliction, public agencies such as the former National Coal Board were involved in reclamation.

7. Generally NTDCs, at least before the election of the Thatcher government in 1979, had a very different relationship to private developers and especially housebuilders to that which will prevail in the Growth Areas. Lengthy negotiations of planning agreements were virtually unknown but are likely to be key issues in the Growth Areas.

8. The post-1979 experiences of New Towns such as Milton Keynes where private housebuilders assumed a much bigger role than had previously been normal may be the most relevant.

9. The New Towns, especially in the south, were very successful in attracting employment that closely matched the skills of their local workforces. Although the wider regional economies clearly have great growth potential, it is less clear how far the Growth Areas will be able to match this record at a more localised level.

4. Research method

4.1 Introduction

The research is desk-based, drawing entirely on secondary, published sources to provide the evidence base for lessons inferred.

A number of stages have been involved in the review of the literature:

1. Identify from a bibliographical search all accessible and relevant research projects and published literature.

2. Undertake an initial sorting of the literature in terms of themes.

3. Undertake a detailed review of the literature in relation to the questions set out above, in order to:
   - establish evidence to address the question;
   - to identify gaps in the literature with respect to particular questions; and
   - to identify any other sub-themes previously not identified.

4. Produce findings in the form of lessons from the New Towns, sorted in terms of:
   a. their transferability;
   b. their level of importance at each stage (policy formation, development, implementation etc); and
   c. their immediacy in terms of the Growth Areas strategy.

The fourth stage involves feedback from the client and other experts to further consider questions of transferability, relevance and immediacy in particular.

4.2 Detailed literature search approach

The most valuable source of materials used for this short exercise is the **New Towns Record 1946-2002**[3], which re-publishes many significant documents in full text, as well as providing materials specially commissioned to fill in gaps in the history of the New Towns. In addition an extensive search of the published literature and other sources was undertaken to meet the specific demands of the brief. The excessive numbers of references encountered on first searching required restrictions to be imposed and it was decided to limit searching to materials on the 21 English New Towns and in the English language only, although some non-English publications with informative abstracts were also included. A list of databases searched is included in the Appendix.

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3   First published by the Planning Exchange in 1997 and revised in 2004.

4.2.1 Appropriate material types

The choice of databases to search is often dictated by the structure of the literature of a particular topic or theme. In the case of New Towns we expected to find:

- government/local government publications
- journal articles
- newspaper articles
- books
- research reports
- conference papers
- theses/dissertations
- other semi-published materials – professional bodies, amenity groups

4.2.2 Subject databases selected

Databases selected (See Appendix) were chosen in disciplines likely to include New Towns literature and included those devoted to architecture, construction, urban planning and management, geography, design, social sciences and social services, as well as general arts and humanities sources. Indexes of newspaper articles and semi-published literature also featured along with databases of current research and catalogues of major national and academic libraries.

4.2.3 Search strategy

Searches were conducted through Oxford Brookes University's computer network using OBU's subscriptions arrangements, although some sources are freely available on the web, and web locations are given for these. The search strategy depended on the specific database and keywords used therein but, generally speaking consisted of (New Town **or** New Towns) **and** (England or Great Britain or United Kingdom). Around 2,000 references were retrieved including duplicates. To these were added the references from the New Towns Record.

4.2.4 Treatment of references

References were then passed for inspection to project team members who selected items to review. These were input to a reference management software package, duplicates removed and a common layout adopted.

5. Thematic findings and lessons

This section sets out the main lessons from the research with respect to the eight themes listed in the Introduction. Each themed section is structured in the following way:

1. Introduction.

2. Summary of points raised by the literature (with reference to the key relevant lessons).

3. Key lessons and conclusions.

Within this overall framework, the treatment of each theme varies slightly, taking account of the theme itself and, in particular, issues of transferability of lessons derived from the literature for each.

The lessons set out under each theme are classified in two ways:

1. An indication of the importance of the lesson:

- **Key lesson:** i.e. *is key to the success of any new development.*

- **Secondary lesson:** *needs to be taken into account, and may in certain circumstances be a key issue.*

2. An indication of what needs to be done:

- **Action:** *some action needs to be taken to implement this lesson at policy level or at another level of operation this lesson.*

- **Aware:** *the lesson is significant in terms of framing any action to be taken, or should be taken on board in terms of formulating action.*

The lessons are presented in a series of tables, one for each main theme. Each lesson identified below is accompanied by a brief recommendation using each of the two categories above. It is hoped that this will help the Growth Areas teams to prioritise the lessons, and any potential action that is needed as a result.

5.1 Delivery

5.1.1 Introduction

This section provides findings from the literature on issues related to the theme of delivery. The theme covers material related to the respective roles of the development corporations, central and local government; the perspectives of the private and voluntary sectors; delivery mechanisms with respect to physical, social and economic factors and needs; and the crucial issue of land assembly. This section needs to be read in conjunction with the findings under the next main theme of finance since, clearly, delivery and funding are intimately connected in any understanding of the New Towns as a model for other types of growth.

The questions raised in the brief relating to Delivery were as follows:

1. *What process and partnerships were put in place to bring it all together (co-ordination)?*
2. *What was the impact of these?*
3. *What were the best/worst delivery mechanisms?*
4. *What was the impact of unified land control?*
5. *Were the New Towns delivered to time, cost and quality?*
6. *What are the problems that are likely to be encountered now?*
7. *What were the key criteria for successful delivery of the overall programme?*
8. *Are there particular issues that need to be addressed in terms of land assembly/phasing?*

Each of these questions is addressed in turn below from a reading of the literature. This provides the basis for then inferring possible transferable lessons with regard to the broad theme of delivery for the Growth Areas Programme.

5.1.2 Summary of points raised by the literature

1. What process and partnerships were put in place to bring it all together (co-ordination)?

Development corporations

- Central to the delivery of all the New Towns during their phase of major growth were the New Town development corporations (Cullingworth, 1979; Schaffer, 1970; Osborn and Whittick, 1977). These were public corporations created, appointed and funded (through loans and subsidies) by central government to deliver the New Towns programme. Normally there was one development corporation per New Town, though a single corporation was responsible for two New Towns in a few cases. The development corporations were exceptionally powerful agencies, with leadership to match. In the great majority of New Towns for most of the life of the programme, they played an overwhelmingly dominant role in developing and to a large extent actually building the New Towns. **(See lesson 1.1)**

- A New Town development corporation had powers to acquire, own, manage and dispose of land and property, undertake building operation, provide public utilities and generally do anything necessary to develop the New Town. The corporations enjoyed exceptionally favourable arrangements for land purchase at existing (or close to existing) use values and were effectively able to acquire all the land needed to build the New Town. They also became powerful place marketing organisations, the most successful promoting a clear brand image for their New Town. Many of the 'partnerships' involved in delivering the New Towns were therefore contained within the individual development corporations **(see lesson 1.2)**. From 1962, New Towns that had reached an advanced stage were handed over to the Commission for the New Towns, which oversaw the later stages of their development.

- Although there was a strong spirit of competition between the New Towns, chairmen, general managers and other chief officers of the development corporations met regularly to discuss matters of common interest (Phelps, NTR, 1997). This became more systematic in the 1970s after the New Towns Association was created by central government, fostering a greater spirit of mutual learning. Most meetings took place in different New Towns rather than London, facilitating inspections of the latest developments and allowing more time for informal discussion. Some individual New Town development corporations also participated in joint initiatives that affected delivery (e.g. national and international marketing). **(See lessons 1.2 & 1.3)**

Central government

- The development corporations' major external delivery 'partner' (though this term was not then applied) was central government (Schaffer, 1970; Delafons, 1997). The central department most involved was the one (variously named over time) responsible for planning, which contained a special directorate to supervise the New Towns programme. Initially the relationships between development corporations and the central New Towns directorate were organised on a fairly individual basis. From 1970, when the New Towns Association was formed, a stronger collective relationship between the New Towns and central government developed. **(See lesson 1.4)**

- A weakness was that the central New Towns directorate did not include representatives of the other central departments involved in New Town development. Critically important amongst these was the Treasury which authorised the necessary finance (with varying degrees of enthusiasm over time). Other central agencies were also involved such as the Board of Trade, responsible for controls and incentives as part of national distribution of industry policies and the Education ministry. Again though, these were not represented on the central directorate. **(See lesson 1.4)**

Local government

- Obviously the main engagement with local government was within the New Town itself (Aldridge, 1979; Cullingworth, 1979; Phelps, 1997). Before considering this, however, it is important to recognise that there were some important interactions with local governments in those metropolitan areas that were exporting population to the New Towns. Local authority housing departments played an important part in promoting the New Towns. In some cases they contributed to the moving expenses of families who were being housed in the New Towns.

- Within the New Towns, the development corporations assumed partial or complete responsibility for many of the normal development functions of local government, providing infrastructure, social housing, planning etc. **(See lesson 1.1)**. However, local authorities continued to be responsible for providing schools, libraries, facilities for emergency services etc. Providing and running these in the early years, in advance of full demand and before local tax income increased, imposed heavy financial burdens and often generated political tensions **(See lesson 1.6)**. The development corporations provided material support. Facilities such as leisure centres were often jointly funded. Cheap or free land for sites and financial contributions were normal. However the rules on land sales changed in 1962, so that local authorities became less able to benefit from the advantageous terms on which the development corporations had originally acquired the land.

● Several later New Towns were large scale expansions of what were already sizeable towns (such as Peterborough and Northampton). Here relations with the local authorities differed significantly and they were explicitly designated as 'partnership New Towns' (this being the term used at the time). The idea here was that local authorities were given a much bigger role than in non-partnership New Towns in, for example, planning and the initiation of development **(See lesson 1.5)**. Over time, all New Town development corporations adopted a more consultative style in respect of the local authorities.

● Generally, though, the local government role was everywhere smaller than is currently being contemplated in the Growth Areas. Contrary to initial (albeit vaguely expressed) intentions, the remaining development land assets of New Towns were not transferred to the local authorities but to the specially created Commission for the New Towns. Following often tortuous negotiations, local authorities usually received the social housing and community assets when the development corporations were wound up.

The private sector

● For the first thirty years of the New Towns programme, the private sector role in development was rather small (Aldridge, 1979; Anderson, 1997). At the outset of the programme, offers by several major private house builders to develop and build New Towns were rejected (Cullingworth 1979; Hebbert, 1992). This stance was confirmed in responses to (very rare) subsequent moves to develop private new settlements, except a few that were much smaller than those developed under the New Towns programme. Initially therefore, the private sector role in delivering the New Towns was confined to manufacturing investment, joined increasingly (at least in the southern New Towns) by office development. Private developers also began to be involved at an early stage in retail provision, particularly in creating several of the main New Town shopping centres in partnership with development corporations. Yet this private sector role pales in comparison with the overwhelming role of the development corporations. These built and managed the great bulk of the housing stock, along with many shop units, especially in district centres, and developed industrial estates. **(See lesson 1.1)**

● This pattern began to be significantly modified from the late 1960s, especially in the southern New Towns. From this time, lease-back arrangements for assets such as shopping centres were actively encouraged to mobilise private finance and development expertise. An advisory committee on institutional finance for the New Towns was also established **(See lesson 1.7)**. Simultaneously, though for different reasons, there was a government desire to see more owner occupation in the New Towns. Although housing sales offered a key route to achieving this in those New Towns that were already substantially developed, private house builders also became involved in a much bigger way than hitherto.

- This went further as governmental scepticism about the New Towns grew in the later 1970s and 1980s. This reflected the very unfavourable financial position of many of the later New Towns at the time consequent on very high interest rates and inflexibility over borrowing rules. In the 1980s a huge write off of debt was necessary (largely in connection with the accumulated Housing Revenue Accounts) at net cost to government estimated by Sorensen (1993) at £3bn. This was the real basis of the shift to a more 'disposal-for-private-development' regime, a major shift in the delivery culture of the corporations. They evolved from agencies that combined the roles of landowner, developer and local authority to a more enabling role for private developers, involving disposal of land on a much larger scale than hitherto.

- This shift was even more apparent in the increasingly commercially-minded, disposal and development (rather than management) oriented approach within the CNT during the 1980s. In the later designated New Towns (such as Milton Keynes, Peterborough, Telford and Warrington) and especially in the more prosperous regions, the role of private house builders greatly increased during the last years before the development corporations were dissolved. **(See lesson 1.8)**

Voluntary agencies

- Churches and other community organisations occupied an important role in the delivery of the New Towns as communities and played some part in the delivery of the physical development (Osborn and Whittick, 1977). Building new churches was a particularly heavy burden, so inter-denominational and increasingly inter-religious churches were usual. As with many other aspects of the New Towns, the development corporations typically assisted with free sites. Community buildings were also provided by the development corporations. Multiple use of such facilities (and those in schools and other public buildings) was pioneered within the New Towns. **(See lesson 1.8)**

The wider community

- The involvement of the wider community in the delivery of the New Towns was limited by today's standards (Aldridge, 1979). Some of this was attributable to the inherent problems of planning and initiating a very large development in advance of a community being present. Much of the concern with the social aspects of delivery therefore took the form of professionally-inferred needs rather than actively manifest 'wants'. This inherent tendency was strengthened by the rather top-down style of the development corporations, which were not subject to normal local democratic control.

- However, the development corporations and central government did learn by experience. After local community resistance at the very outset of the New Towns programme, the development corporations recognised the importance of ensuring a high level of information to both pre-existing and incoming populations and promoting informed public discussion (Orlans, 1952; Gold and Ward, 1994). The development corporations also tried increasingly to monitor actual experiences of newcomers **(See lesson 1.10)**. Despite this, though, there were many signs of irritation with novel housing designs, circulation systems and other problems. Often the local authorities (although they had their own specific interests) became mouthpieces for wider community concerns. Generally, despite the changes over time, the development corporations always prioritised effectiveness in delivery over public engagement.

2. What was the impact of this process and these partnerships?

Note: Several key points on this have already been addressed above to explain how arrangements evolved and will not therefore be repeated here.

Overall delivery of growth

- The growth promised by the New Towns programme was very largely delivered, at least in those regions which also had the strongest economic prospects for growth **(See lesson 1.17)**. Thus by 1991 the New Towns built to serve London's overspill needs (that is, the same broad area as the current Growth Areas strategy) had fulfilled 90 per cent of their projected growth (Wannop, 1999). During their development phases, New Towns here were frequently amongst the fastest growing UK settlements.

- Elsewhere in the UK, New Towns were much less effective at delivering growth **(See lesson 1.17)**. As this suggests, growth rates reflected wider economic factors. The priority given to achieving a high degree of employment self-containment and balanced development meant that housing provision did not run ahead of jobs, services etc. These concerns were especially strong in the earlier and middle phases of the programme, when public development of housing was overwhelmingly dominant, allowing housing allocation to be closely matched to the requirements of the local job market.

- By some international standards, the growth performance of all the UK New Towns also appears less impressive. It took half a century for the UK New Towns to achieve 1.4 million population growth. The Hong Kong New Towns, involving quite similar delivery mechanisms, achieved that growth in ten years. However, there were fundamental differences in the political and social contexts and major differences in the quality of the planning concept and actual urban form that limit the comparability of the Hong Kong experience to the UK.

Public sector-led delivery

- Despite the above qualifications, the very strong land acquisition, infrastructure provision, planning and especially house building powers of the development corporations were very effective in delivering the UK New Towns **(See lesson 1.1)**. Only eight years from the start of the programme (less from the start dates of most of them) the New Towns of the London region had delivered a third of their then projected growth (Wannop, 1999). This was despite the major start-up investment that was needed before extensive house building could actually begin in most of them. Even in the later, larger New Towns, in which private housing developers ultimately played a much bigger role, public sector house building facilitated the early establishment of a critical mass of development that gave shape to the New Town plans at a time when the programme was coming under threat.

- Central government funding was absolutely fundamental to delivery of the New Towns (Thomas, 1997) **(See lesson 1.15)**. Despite occasional Treasury qualms and its growing insistence on financial objectives that had not originally been present, the programme was funded with remarkable political consistency for much of its life. The early New Towns were able to secure long term Treasury loans at what by historical standards were low rates of interest[4] and subsidies (for rental housing) on advantageous terms. Later New Towns suffered from the inflexibility of having to borrow long term from these sources at very high interest rates. Greater flexibility in the source and length of loans would then have been very helpful. They also suffered disproportionately from changes in the housing subsidy arrangements in 1972 which significantly worsened their overall financial position. **(See lesson 1.16)**

- Central government control had other consequences for delivery. Ministers saw the New Towns as projects over which they could exert a direct influence, to a greater extent than local authority projects. This meant the latest fashions in development (for example, industrialised building) were sometimes pressed on development corporations, especially from the 1960s **(See lesson 1.19)**. However, local authorities in redevelopment areas were not immune to this tendency either, so it should not be overstressed.

Relations with local authorities in delivery

- Existing research suggests that the financial and political pressures on local authorities consequent on New Town development were not fully appreciated in the formulation of the programme **(See lesson 1.6)**. But, as already indicated, policy evolved in a pragmatic way which overcame many of the difficulties, not always to the satisfaction of the local authorities.

- The experiences of the partnership New Towns have greatest relevance for the current situation. Unfortunately, there is no research which systematically evaluates these partnership arrangements. However, what research there is suggests that they had many advantages in the delivery of the New Towns affected (House of Commons, 1975; Aldridge, 1979; Phelps, 1997; Way, 1997). The partnerships were not made to a precise statutory formula but were agreed on an individual basis. In Northampton, for example, the local authority took responsibility for delivering town centre redevelopment (with private developers), leisure and amenity facilities, tasks which normally fell to development corporations. There was also co-operation in the use of key delivery staff.

- Despite these and other efforts to give the local authority partners a greater sense of ownership of the New Town, many of the familiar financial problems for local authorities also emerged in the partnership New Towns, especially so because of increasing financial stringency during the 1970s. There are also hints that inter-organisational working on delivery suffered because of jealousies over the higher status and pay prevailing in the development corporations. **(See lesson 1.20)**

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4   These interest rates were actually higher than those which might have been available at the time for short term loans from market sources. At this stage, however, the security of the funding was more significant than interest premium, especially since, by later standards, rates for loans from government sources were not high.

Relations with private sector in delivery

- Though the basic dimensions of the increasing private sector role in delivering the New Towns programme in its later phases are well recognised, there has been no systematic evaluation of its overall impact. The dominant New Towns 'narrative' tells a largely public sector story. This is unfortunate since the shift to private sector delivery is of great relevance to current concerns. However, some points can be made. The first is to underline the general point that the New Towns, especially but not exclusively in the south, were extremely attractive prospects for the private sector and became more so over time **(See lesson 1.17)**. In some ways, this was more expressed at the disposal rather than the delivery stage, but the private sector has played an important recent role in the regeneration of some shopping centres.

- Disappointingly, little research attention has been given to the growing involvement of private house builders, other than to bemoan (not always fairly) the impact on housing design. It is, however, clear that a process of increasingly close engagement took place from the later 1970s (Bishop, 1986; Bendixson and Platt, 1992). In Milton Keynes, for example, the NTDC established a private housing unit and organised promotional seminars and other initiatives to interest the volume builders, who were initially reluctant to build there. In part this reluctance seems to have reflected early uncertainties about the local market. To combat this, NTDCs made use of licence arrangements allowing delayed payments for site purchase. **(See lesson 1.8)**

- There may also have been some initial housebuilder wariness about the possible tightness of planning controls. NTDCs certainly wished to control how areas were developed, and were able to use not just their planning powers but also their powerful position as land owner and infrastructure provider. This meant that planning agreements/obligations, in sense of the now superseded section 52 (of the 1971 Town and Country Planning Act) or section 106 (of the 1990 Act), did not feature in the delivery process. As well as purely physical planning considerations, arrangements for site disposals to private developers were used to seek some degree of social mix at the local level, always a strong theme in the delivery of the New Towns.

- However, it is clear that, as the housebuilders realised the market potential of the New Towns, especially those in the prosperous regions, they became more willing to be involved on a larger scale (Ward, 2005). In part this reflected the relative cheapness and abundance of New Town land with planning permission for residential development compared to surrounding areas. It also seems to have reflected a greater flexibility on the part of the NTDCs, effectively giving the volume builders a freer hand. By the early/mid 1980s, this partnership had matured sufficiently for New Towns, specifically Milton Keynes, to be cited by the volume house-builders as benchmarks in the provision of relatively cheap land with planning permission for housing development in green field locations (Evidence of Volume House Builders' Study Group to House of Commons Environment Committee, 28th March 1984). The remaining New Towns with large reserves of developable housing land were now therefore, in the house-builders' perceptions, exceptions to the normally restrictive local authority planning approach which they found elsewhere in the south **(See lesson 1.8)**. Further confirmation of this growing rapprochement was the extensive involvement of key former Milton Keynes (and to a lesser extent Telford) personnel in the most co-ordinated move to develop private new towns in the 1980s (Ward, 2005). This kind of relationship with the *private* house builders also appears to have grown within the CNT, though no evaluative research of its work has been found.

3. What were the best/worst delivery mechanisms?

This cannot be addressed without some consideration of the criteria being applied. Moreover, the absence of any very significant research on either the partnership arrangements or the more private sector delivery mode of later years makes it difficult to draw any very firm conclusions. However, it is possible to advance some tentative points.

Delivery of physical development

- This is particularly difficult to judge since circumstances changed over the programme's life 1946-1997 (Aldridge, 1979). What was effective when there was strong government commitment to public rental housing was ineffective when that commitment shifted to private house building for owner occupation. There were also geographical variations. The stronger degree of partnership, though desirable in other ways, was also more effective only when local authorities had the capacity and spatial focus on the area of growth to undertake a fuller role **(See lesson 1.5)**. The later trend to large scale involvement of private developers was also a very effective mechanism but on a much greater scale in those New Towns where economic growth prospects were sufficiently strong to underpin growth. **(See lessons 1.8 & 1.17)**

Delivery on social criteria

- Social criteria are here taken to have three dimensions: the provision of good quality, affordable housing; the provision of community social capital such as schools, health and community facilities; and the creation of socially-mixed and 'balanced' communities.

- On the first of these, public sector-led, direct development corporation delivery or partnership New Town variants were apparently the most effective mechanisms for delivering housing that was affordable to tenants. Generally attractive dwellings were provided by this means for those formerly experiencing housing need in the big cities (though rarely in practice for those in the very worst housing situations). In part this affordability to tenants was underpinned by the generally low land costs that were typical of New Towns. This was an advantage that could be maintained while this housing remained in the public sector. However, affordability to tenants also reflected a strong bipartisan political commitment to public sector housing subsidies. Increasingly, this has been deemed politically unaffordable since the 1970s. **(See lesson 1.19)**

- Most of the public sector rental housing stock that was provided in the New Towns was of good quality in its design and construction. However, the New Towns were also seen by Governments as, to some extent, demonstration projects for non-traditional housing systems, especially during the 1960s and early 1970s. A higher proportion of this stock has experienced long term maintenance problems, as recognised in housing defects legislation in the 1980s. This has necessitated additional government expenditure to rectify defects and compensate subsequent landlords or occupants.

- On the second social criterion, the low land costs associated with New Town development and access to long term funds also facilitated the provision of social facilities for the New Towns. Generally this was held true for all modes of delivering development in the New Towns. However, the imposition of increasingly tight rules about land disposals made it more difficult for NTDCs to pass on the benefits of cheap land to local government and voluntary sector providers of social capital.

- Public sector-dominated delivery also made it easier to ensure balanced development in the sense of creating employment, housing, public and private services etc., in close proximity to each other (Thomas, 1969). As housing delivery shifted to private sector, it became more difficult to ensure that linkage (though this was also influenced by rising car use and major road investments in the vicinity of many New Towns). However, public sector-dominated delivery undoubtedly resulted in more 'unbalanced' social development that, even by contemporary standards, was skewed disproportionately towards the young, white, more skilled and more affluent sections of the working classes (Heraud, 1966). In most of the earlier New Towns professional and managerial groups were underrepresented, as were the unskilled and the old. Compared to the inner metropolitan areas, there was also a noticeable time lag before ethnic minorities began to appear in any numbers in the New Towns. By the 1970s, however, NTDCs were beginning to make strenuous efforts to address these imbalances.

- The shift towards a greater private sector role in housing delivery, not bounded by the eligibility rules which governed the allocation of public sector housing, made it easier for the New Towns to house a wider social spectrum, especially more affluent groups. Here again, though, other factors were important in this increasing social diversity. As well as right-to-buy sales of NTDC housing, there was also growing tendency for later New Towns to include within their boundaries larger amounts of pre-existing, older housing. This increased the diversity of the available stock within the New Towns, with corresponding implications for social diversity.

Delivery on financial criteria

- In practice, earlier southern New Towns such as Harlow or Bracknell moved into profit at an earlier stage in their development because of the favourable national economic and financial climate in which they were developed and the general prosperity of the wider region in which they were located (Turok, 1990; Thomas, 1997). In these cases the classic development corporation delivery model was very effective **(See lesson 1.1)**. However, the model worked less well in later New Towns such as Milton Keynes because of high interest rates, inflexibility over borrowing rules and changes in housing subsidy regimes **(See lesson 1.16)**. Many later New Towns also had to spend much more on infrastructure and at an earlier stage in their development, with correspondingly less spending on the rental housing which brought in valuable early direct returns in rents and subsidies. Amongst this later group of New Towns, it is unclear whether those established on a partnership basis actually performed better than the others. This is because it is difficult to separate the effect of the partnership model per se from the general situation of an already sizeable settlement being expanded rather than a New Town that is more completely new.

- The suspension of interest and debt write-offs of the 1980s obviously reflect badly on the overall delivery record of the later New Towns measured on financial criteria. However, disposals of property assets by development corporations and the CNT became the way in which the enhanced values created by these New Towns were captured for the public purse **(See lesson 1.14)**. In contrast to the earlier period, when most land disposals (to public and voluntary agencies) were at below market levels, this had the advantage that such sales reflected market values. The extent to which individual New Towns were able to improve their financial record by this means has obviously varied. For the later New Towns in the more prosperous regions, however, the 'disposal-and-private delivery' model would seem to have been more successful on purely financial criteria.

4. What was the impact of unified land control?

- Unified land control was absolutely central to delivery. This was especially so in New Town areas with very fragmented pre-existing ownership (eg. Basildon) (Osborn and Whittick, 1977). The development corporations and partners such as the local authorities were thereby spared many problems of detailed land assembly or complex negotiations with developers on a site-by-site basis (Walker, 1999a). **(See lesson 1.11)**

- Even more important, however, was the acquisition of that land at, or close to, existing use values. This made it possible to reduce the land costs in delivery of housing (or any other buildings, including public and community facilities) to extraordinarily low levels **(See lessons 1.9 & 1.12)**. At comparable early stages in their development, the unserviced land cost component of houses in Harlow and Milton Keynes has been demonstrated to have been only about one per cent of housing costs at the time (Thomas, 1997). Obviously this had a major long term implications for the profitability of the New Towns, since renting or disposal of assets could reap handsome profits. This realisation was a major factor in Treasury support for the programme in the 1950s, since these profits could be (and were) used to swell central coffers. **(See lesson 1.14)**

5. Were the New Towns delivered to time, cost and quality?

- There was never any very clear specification of policy objectives in respect of any of the above in the New Towns programme, particularly in its formative and middle stages when most development occurred (Aldridge, 1979). Nevertheless some relevant observations can be made.

Time

- Though it was never very overtly expressed, the programme seems to have been initiated with the sense of the major phase of delivery needed to create towns of ultimately about 50,000 people being roughly ten years (Cullingworth, 1979). This was obviously a very approximate figure since the existing populations of designated sites varied. In addition the major development/migration phase would not itself cause the final target to be reached because there would also be some subsequent natural increase amongst the incoming population.

- One indicator of completion of the development phase was the handing over of the New Towns to the CNT when they were supposed to be treated henceforth as normal towns. This began in 1962, a development period of about 15 years for the two New Towns then handed over. The others all took longer, often much longer, to complete the envisaged growth **(See lesson 1.14)**. However, this cannot itself be taken as a failure of the development corporations (at least of the southern New Towns) to deliver. Quite apart from the severe financial pressures of the early post-war period **(See lesson 1.17)**, the ultimate targets of existing New Towns were subsequently increased and most later designated New Towns had from the outset much more ambitious growth targets than their predecessors. This encouraged greater pragmatism over how long growth might take to deliver. Political attitudes to the CNT also varied over time, slowing down (in the later 1960s) or accelerating (in the 1980s) the hand over process.

Cost
- At the outset of the programme, it was recognised that the New Towns would ultimately show a profit. Yet delivery was not dominated by this consideration and the funding of the New Towns was, for most of the programme's duration, an administrative arrangement between government bodies rather than being based on quasi-market criteria. The broad expectation was that the New Towns would, within a reasonable but undefined period, move into a profitable position, acknowledging that circumstances would vary between individual New Towns and over time. Financial disciplines were tightened later in the programme's life but trying to apply these retrospectively is misleading. Generally the new strictures were applied to subsequent development projects within the programme rather than the programme itself. At any rate, scarcely any economists have even attempted anything like a complete analysis of actual costs of the programme. Most have understandably preferred to highlight the problems that this would entail.

- In 1993, Sorensen estimated that the New Towns programme had in crude terms cost £7.6 billion, comprising £4.6bn loans with the remainder in interest foregone. By that date the government had recovered 57 per cent of its costs on the programme. These estimates were largely based on figures for historic costs, taking no account of inflation. They also take no account of transfer of assets (from development corporations or CNT) to other public bodies at less than market value, the treatment of which is very problematic in accounting terms. Finally, they also do not take account of the continuing returns since that date through land disposals at market value, which are likely to show the later New Towns in an increasingly favourable light.

- Also, the experiences of different New Towns varied. Some achieved early profitability (e.g. Harlow, Bracknell), some developed in less favourable circumstances only achieved profitability in the disposal phase (e.g. Milton Keynes), others never achieved profitability (e.g. Runcorn). **(See lesson 1.17)**

Quality of housing and the built environment
- The programme was imbued with a general understanding that the quality of what was provided was to be exemplary, a model of contemporary enlightened urban development. Practically all published research on the New Towns programme when it was in full swing stressed that, in most cases, high quality was being achieved. There was, though, never any precise attempt to express quality of output in criteria that could readily be measured to permit some evaluation of achieved benefits relative to costs.

- With hindsight, the New Towns have also suffered from changing conceptions of what constitutes 'quality'. A small proportion of public sector New Town housing has suffered from constructional and design features which have not aged well (House of Commons, 2002) **(See lesson 1.19)**. Planned arrangements of buildings, space and circulation systems in many New Towns also reflect the then prevailing assumptions about living patterns. Some of these assumptions were, variously, mistaken at the time, have objectively changed or are not currently favoured. (This is not to imply that currently favoured assumptions about living patterns are necessarily 'correct'.) Moreover, this general observation must be set in context. It is clear that a very high volume of sales of housing to tenants under right-to-buy legislation have occurred within the New Towns, especially in the prosperous regions (Pott, 1997). While the financial terms of such purchases were very favourable to tenants, this still must be taken as an indication of a high level of satisfaction with the quality of what was originally provided (Lessons from this are contained in other sections).

6. *What were the problems that are likely to be encountered now?*

- Variability of central government thinking, policy guidance and financial provision over a long term programme – 'changing the rules'. **(See lesson 1.19 and lessons under other sections)**

- Impact of prevailing economic conditions on pace of delivery. **(See lesson 1.19)**

- Land assembly is obviously a problem which has to be overcome before any large scale development can be delivered.

- Balancing need for strong and effective leadership in delivery with that for effective public participation. **(See Governance lessons)**

- Balancing financial performance targets (from which New Towns were relatively insulated for much of their life) against other delivery targets. **(See lesson 1.14)**

- Establishing effective working relationships between private sector delivery partners and public sector leaders/co-ordinators (which was much less significant in the New Towns than it will be in the Growth Areas). **(See lesson 1.8)**

- Finding mode of working with and between public sector delivery partners, especially those with wider jurisdictions than just the Growth Areas. **(See lesson 1.5)**

- Attracting high calibre staff to delivery organisations and preventing differences in status between staff in different organisations that might impede delivery. **(See lesson 1.20)**

- Creating a framework to ensure mutual learning between Growth Areas delivery organisations. **(See lesson 1.2)**

- Ensuring positive and effective marketing of Growth Areas. **(See lesson 1.18)**

7. What were the key criteria for successful delivery of the overall programme?

- Powerful public sector delivery agencies with total spatial focus on the New Town area. **(See lessons 1.1 & 1.5)**

- Ability to acquire land early and at existing or close to existing value. **(See lesson 1.11)**

- Unified land ownership. **(See lesson 1.11)**

- More general economic growth conditions in wider regions. **(See lesson 1.17)**

- Ability to attract employment in (or very near) chosen locations. **(See lesson 1.17)**

- Strong and very determined leadership. **(See lesson 1.1 & lessons under Governance)**

- High calibre professional staff with high commitment to delivery and quality. **(See lesson 1.1, 1.20 & lessons under Governance)**

- Strong commitment to the New Towns programme within central government even through political changes. **(See lesson 1.4)**

- Access to major public finance, especially in early and middle phases. **(See lesson 1.15)**

- Ability to attract and involve private developers on an increasingly large scale. **(See lesson 1.8)**

- Some flexibility in adjusting delivery mechanisms in different locations (e.g. to secure greater local government involvement). **(See lesson 1.6)**

8. Are there particular issues that need to be addressed in terms of land assembly/phasing?

- Costs were kept down when land for New Town development was purchased as early as possible (Rowan-Robinson, 1997; Thomas, 1997). In the early New Towns, the development corporations often acquired only the next few years' land requirements so that it was some time before they had acquired the entire site of the New Town. Although the principle was that they were able to purchase land at a value not influenced by the existence of New Town itself, it became more difficult to adhere to this in practice. This was a bigger problem in the already partly urbanised areas where some more limited urban growth might have been expected even without the New Town, an issue which was highlighted by the Myer's case of 1974. Such situations were more typical of the later New Towns. Here the NTDCs generally undertook land purchase with greater alacrity but they subsequently faced much increased difficulties when they sought to buy any sites. **(See lesson 1.11)**

5.1.3 Key lessons from the literature on delivery

Table 5.1: Lessons on delivery		
	Organisation needed:	**Comment**
1.1	NTDCs were exceptionally powerful delivery vehicles which dominated the entire development process, not just as 'lead developers'. Delivery on the scale comparable to that of the New Towns will involve creating agencies of similar potency, even though their actual form will probably differ.	**Key lesson requiring action**
1.2	An organisation should be created to facilitate regular contact between the delivery partnerships of all the Growth Areas, not just via the ODPM, involving opportunities for mutual learning.	**Key lesson requiring action**
1.3	Though some degree of competition between the Growth Areas is to be expected and should be encouraged, joint initiatives by local partnerships should also be encouraged where appropriate.	**Key lesson requiring action**
1.4	A central Growth Areas directorate should be created, with representatives from **all** involved central departments. This would be to reduce the burden on individual local partnerships in resolving specific delivery issues on matters outside the remit of the ODPM and, so far as is feasible, provide a degree of programme continuity through different administrations.	**Key lesson requiring action**
1.5	Whatever the actual form of delivery partnerships, the major partners need to be spatially focused on the growth area for which they are responsible.	**Key lesson requiring awareness**
1.6	Local authority partners especially may find their ability to deliver is constrained by the many other pressures on them, especially so in periods of financial restraint.	**Key lesson requiring action**
1.7	Some overall mechanism to advise on and assist with securing private development finance and assembling financial packages may be necessary.	**Key lesson requiring action**
1.8	The extent of private developers' participation in delivery will ultimately depend on their initial perceptions and ongoing experiences of local market conditions, though this will be influenced by the actions of public sector partners on matters including site disposal and finding the right balance between flexibility and certainty within the planning regime. This balance may change over time.	**Key lesson requiring action**
1.9	Delivery partnerships should be as accommodating as possible in securing/providing premises for voluntary agencies and community clubs and associations.	**Key lesson requiring action**
1.10	Delivery partnerships (rather than individual partners) should monitor experiences of newcomers closely to facilitate ongoing improvement of delivery experiences.	**Key lesson requiring action**
Land acquisition, disposal and financing:		
1.11	All necessary land for delivery should be acquired well in advance of anticipated development and ownerships consolidated as much as possible.	**Key lesson requiring action**
1.12	The additional land values created by development should, as far as possible, be available for subsidising provision of public facilities and investments necessary to promote further developments. The mechanisms for achieving this will in many cases differ from the New Towns.	**Key lesson requiring action**
1.13	Where public land ownership is involved then the pattern of using additional value to underwrite other development may not differ significantly from what occurred in the New Towns. Care should however be taken to ensure that any returns to public agencies based on enhanced values are retained within the Growth Areas concerned.	**Key lesson requiring awareness**
1.14	Central government should also be cautious in expecting any early financial return from the Growth Areas based on enhanced values if it wishes to maintain the growth momentum and create attractive sustainable communities.	**Key lesson requiring awareness**

	Land acquisition, disposal and financing:	Comment
1.15	Finance from central government is likely to be critical in establishing the growth momentum in the early phases.	**Key lesson requiring action**
1.16	In the longer term it is important to ensure that public financing arrangements to delivery organisations are sufficiently flexible to avoid problems which may arise from interest rate rises of the type which created such problems for the later New Towns.	**Key lesson requiring action**
1.17	Notwithstanding all the earlier lessons, the pace of delivery will reflect overall economic conditions and, if to a lesser extent, those prevailing in the more immediate sub-region of the individual Growth Areas.	**Secondary lesson requiring awareness**
	Other issues:	
1.18	Careful attention should be given by delivery partnership organisations to marketing and the establishment of clear brand images for each growth area. (Without this, the actions of many individual developers in their own marketing may make it more difficult to establish clear place images and will impact on the sense of identity).	**Secondary lesson requiring action**
1.19	Central government should be cautious in seeing the Growth Areas as test beds for the latest innovations (e.g. in construction techniques). The advantages of such innovations may only be very short term and may create longer term problems.	**Key lesson requiring awareness**
1.20	Care should be taken to minimise differences in pay, conditions etc of delivery staff employed by different partners but otherwise performing equivalent work.	**Key lesson requiring awareness**

5.2 Theme Two: Finance

5.2.1 Introduction

This section provides findings from the literature on issues related to Finance. The theme covers material related to initial loans and subsidies to the New Town Development Corporation, issues of income and receipts during the Development Corporations' lifetime, the role of the private sector, and issues relating to maintenance and repair of key assets.

The New Towns policy was implemented during a period of significant change, both in terms of the economic climate and the policy thinking on the public/private balance that is desirable in such a development. Both these factors have had significant impacts of the evolution of financial issues relating to the New Towns, and have meant that the outcomes for the different generations of New Towns have been quite different.

The questions raised in the brief relating to finance were as follows:

1. *How were New Towns financed, and how was subsequent growth financed?*
2. *How successful have attempts to lever in private finance been? What worked best?*
3. *How were receipts received by New Towns handled?*
4. *How have/have New Towns raised sufficient funds to pay for ongoing maintenance and repair of key assets?*

Each of these questions is addressed in turn below from a reading of the literature. This provides the basis for then inferring possible transferable lessons with regard to the broad theme of finance for the Growth Areas Programme.

5.2.2 Summary of points raised in the literature

1. How were New Towns financed and how was subsequent growth financed?

- Britain's New Towns were financed by loans from central government. These redeemable loans were provided at a fixed rate of interest for a 60-year period. There was a limit imposed on the Development Corporation's overall borrowing power. During the 1950s, the first generation of New Towns paid a relatively low interest rate of 3%. However, from the 1960s interest rates began to rise, and by the 1970s, high interest rates were affecting the financial performance of the second and third generation New Towns quite dramatically. **(See lesson 2.3)**

- In the early stages, land was acquired by the Development Corporation at near existing use values (which were in the main agricultural price levels), and which provided the New Towns with the financial as well as physical foundations for subsequent development. **(See lesson 2.1)**

- There were issues around the acquisition and development of land in advance of New Town growth. To obtain land at the best price, it had to be purchased well in advance of development. Infrastructure also had to be installed in advance of population growth and demand, and thus before the increase in local income tax. Therefore New Town construction required significant finance over a considerable period of time, with corresponding financial implications, both for the Development Corporation as well as the relevant local authority.

- As the New Town developed, the Development Corporations sold, as well as acquired, land. Land used for schools, open space and public parks for example, was sold to local authorities or other bodies to manage and maintain the facilities. Initially Development Corporations were able to provide material support to local authorities, often with cheap or free land for amenity sites. However, a change of rules in 1962 made it harder for Development Corporations to pass on the benefits of their advantageous terms to local authorities. For property sold at market prices, surpluses were usually made, which provided a means by which the increased values created through the New Towns could boost the accounts.

- The financing of housing built for rent in the New Towns was operated in a similar fashion to the policy for local authorities, with the government providing subsidies to the Development Corporations for houses built for rent. In terms of revenue, New Town housing activities evolved over time, with the government's changing housing policy. Up to the late 1960s, the Development Corporations had full responsibility for determining the level of housing rents. However, the 1967 Housing Finance Act encouraged Development Corporations to disregard the effects of high interest rates, and the 1972 Act saw the control of rent levels taken out of the hands of Development Corporations altogether.

- Later in the life of the New Towns, revenue was raised through selling housing for owner occupation through the right to buy legislation introduced in the early 1970s, and further developed from 1980.

- The New Towns programme was designed for the favourable economic climate of the 1950s and 1960s. By the 1970s, high interest rates and the changed economic environment led to growing financial deficits. **(See lesson 2.3)**

- The fixed rates of interest for the 60-year loans were the financial undoing of the later generations of New Towns. Development Corporations were not allowed to borrow on other terms, or from other sources. Although the regulations on borrowing were later modified, the second and third generation of New Towns ran up significant debts which later had to be written off, because they had accumulated such enormous deficits, and were also paying interest on them (Sorensen, 1993; Peiser and Chang, 1999). **(See lesson 2.4)**

- Subsequent growth of New Towns has been financed through a variety of means, including using the Development Corporation's unique land disposal and planning powers. For example, land has been offered for sale with a development brief under which less profitable uses have in effect been subsidised by the commercial uses. As a result, the private sector has funded many social components of the New Town, essentially saving public expenditure.

2. *How successful have attempts to lever in private finance been?*
What worked best?

- Initially, the private sector played a very small role in the development of New Towns, being confined to modest investment in manufacturing and later, office development (Hebbert, 1989). In one New Town, Crawley, private sector housing was starting to be encouraged in the 1950s (Simmonds, 2001), but this was the exception rather than the rule.

- However, from the early 1970s, the involvement of the private sector was positively encouraged by the government. This has been achieved through the disposal of land, either on a freehold or leasehold basis, using terms which require the purchaser or lessee to carry out the development in accordance with proposals set out in the New Towns Act. This has resulted in increasing private sector involvement in the development of private housing, shops, factories, warehouses, offices and other commercial development. A national policy move towards increased owner occupation in housing prompted increased housing sales of rental property, and at the same time, encouraged the involvement of private house builders in the development of New Towns (Lock, 1989).

- Private sector developers were also drawn, in some cases, by special deals from the Development Corporation to attract retail traders, for example, rent-free periods. The rents were later converted into commercial rates, once the development became more viable. Commercially viable retail centres were later sold off to private companies.

- In terms of what worked best, the public sector played an important role in providing initial infrastructure, which acted as a means of developing confidence in the development. In the later New Towns, although private companies played a major role in providing housing, it was the initial public sector house building that laid the foundations for future private-sector led growth, giving credibility to the development, and reducing perceived risk. **(See lesson 2.1)**

3. How were receipts received by New Towns handled?

- Apart from receiving subsidies, there were four main sources of income for the New Towns: selling land they had previously bought, receiving rental income, selling housing through the right to buy legislation, and receiving commercial income.

- Initially, New Towns spent more than they earned through income, and the general revenue accounts show annual losses. These were transferred to the balance where they accumulated as an increase in liabilities.

- When income exceeded interest payments, then the New Town's accounts showed a profit. However, the terms of redemption of the 60-year loan made by the Treasury to the Development Corporation did not allow for ad hoc repayments. Surpluses, like deficits, were transferred to the balance sheet.

- Selling property was also recorded as a net surplus in the balance sheets. However, not all sales of Development Corporation property resulted in a surplus. Ancillary undertakings such as sewage works were normally transferred at cost. Open space was often transferred to the local authority at a nominal charge, with a loss rather than a surplus being recorded in the accounts of the Corporation.

- The surpluses generated by the more financially successful first generation of New Towns were used in a variety of ways. Harlow became a significant lender of money, for example to the Thames Water Authority, and so generated further significant sums in interest payments. As a result of these growing surpluses, Harlow, Bracknell and Stevenage were all required to pay these back to the Treasury in 1975. For an assessment of Bracknell's finances, see Turok (1990).

4. How have/have New Towns raised sufficient funds to pay for ongoing maintenance and repair of key assets? E.g. transport infrastructure, shopping centres etc...

- Many of the New Towns assets were disposed of during the 1970s and '80s (Strachan, 1980). When the Development Corporations were wound up, the assets which hadn't been disposed of were transferred to the Commission for New Towns. Thus responsibility for the on-going maintenance and repair of key assets is now in the hands of the controlling authority/body.

- The Development Corporations were encouraged by the Commission for the New Towns to transfer "community related assets" to the relevant local authorities, or to another approved successor body such as a charity. These assets included parks and open spaces, meeting halls, and sports facilities. As community related assets, they tended to be non-profit making, so the transfer was normally accompanied by an "endowment" of cash or income-producing assets, sufficient to maintain the asset indefinitely.

- However, a recent report to the House of Commons Transport, Local Government and the Regions Committee (2002) highlighted the growing problem faced by New Towns in terms of their increasingly obsolescent infrastructure. It underlined the fact that the reinvestment needs of New Towns have not been addressed by government, and that a significant policy change is needed to tackle issues of run-down public facilities, deteriorated public spaces and aging housing estates (Lipman, 2002).

- A way forward in maintaining assets and managing growth in the future could be through capturing increased land values. Lock (1998) has suggested, in reflecting on the experience of the New Towns, that new development should capture these increased values created by the process of urbanisation, harnessing them as a source of funding for managing growth and change. Such a proposal may well be appropriate for financing maintenance and repair in the Growth Areas, if the circumstances allowed.

- Despite the debts recorded particularly in the later generations of New Towns, the research to date suggests that the New Towns overall were good value for money (Walker, 1999; Hall, 2004). Certainly the later generations of New Towns were less successful financially, partly due to the vagaries of economic cycles, but overall the programme provided functioning urban areas, with substantial infrastructure and assets, housing and jobs, at a reasonable cost to the government and tax payer.

5.2.3 Key lessons from the literature on finance

Table 5.2: Lessons on finance		
	Lessons:	**Comment**
2.1	Guarantees of financial support are essential to provide backing for a large-scale New Town/growth area programme, in order to provide confidence, reduce risk, and give credibility to the development.	**Key lesson requiring action**
2.2	In costing up a New Town/growth area, account should be taken of the significant investment in infrastructure that will be necessary before population growth, both in terms of the time necessary and budget required.	**Key lesson requiring action**
2.3	It is important to think ahead about different scenarios in the event of possible changes in the economic climate, for example, recession or accelerated growth, high or low inflation, and significant rapid changes in interest rates, in order to build risk management into the overall planning, and if necessary, make contingency arrangements, particularly in terms of financing. The lack of flexibility in the financing of New Towns led to significant deficits, the scale of which could have been avoided.	**Key lesson requiring action**
2.4	If the Growth Areas are to be financed or part-financed by loans, these should be on flexible terms, in relation to the source of finance and length of loan.	**Key lesson requiring action**

5.3 Theme three: Creating Communities

5.3.1 Introduction

The issue of 'creating communities' goes to the heart of the New Towns' objectives. The aim of the New Towns policy was to integrate communities and employment, to create new places where homes and jobs were readily available for newcomers to 'slot into'. But 'creating communities' demands time and energy, and the mix of circumstances in the New Towns meant that this task was more easily achieved in some towns than others.

Much has been written about 'creating communities', both within the New Towns context (and the Garden City Movement) and more broadly across a range of social science and built environment disciplines. The literature reviewed for this study relates explicitly to the experience in the New Towns, but clearly the complexity of the subject, and its salience to the success of new settlements/Growth Areas, warrants evidence being reviewed from other sources, to learn from the lessons of a variety of cases.

The concept of community is a complex and at times contested notion, and when discussing 'creating communities', it is important to understand what is meant by the term, whether it is just the physical form of a 'community' or whether it refers to a broader 'active social democracy'. It is also necessary to distinguish between 'new settlements' and 'new communities' with the former implying the physical provision of housing and the latter something beyond bricks and mortar. Here we refer to a 'community' as a group of individuals living in the same neighbourhood, who have a shared identity around the place they live, the social infrastructure they use, and a place where 'social capital' is strong (social networks, neighbourliness, trust etc.). This necessarily subjective definition is our understanding of what the New Towns were setting out to create, in bringing new residents together in newly built settlements.

The questions raised in the brief relating to the theme of community creation were:

1. *How can integrated communities be created? How quickly?*
2. *What drew people to New Towns and what keeps their children there?*
3. *What worked and didn't work in terms of community master planning?*
4. *How did the physical environment and housing help or hinder the creation of communities?*
5. *How did the provision of education and health facilities help or hinder the creation of communities?*
6. *How have the initial communities changed over time, and are there any positive and negative implications to this?*
7. *What evidence is there relating to the relationship between the New Towns and issues of social inclusion?*
8. *What evidence is there for any exacerbation of 'inner city problems' as a consequence of the New Towns?*

Each of these questions is addressed in turn below from a reading of the literature. This provides the basis for then inferring possible transferable lessons with regard to the broad theme of creating communities for the Growth Areas Programme.

5.3.2 Summary of points raised by the literature

1. How can integrated communities be created? How quickly?

- It was recognised early on in the first generation of New Towns that 'creating communities' would be an important component to the success of the New Towns policy. New Towns needed to provide a sense of belonging for people who had come from diverse backgrounds and places, as well as provide them with an opportunity to participate in the development process. In some New Towns, a post was created by the Development Corporation, entrusted with 'social relations', 'social liaison' or so-called 'community development'. These Social/Community Development Officers and their teams played a vital role in creating communities, ensuring information reached people for example through distributing newsletters, and that individuals were involved as far as possible in decision-making as the settlement grew (Waterman, 1996). Local offices were set up, often in a house within a new neighbourhood, to act as a point of information, and as a base from which Community Development Officers could call in on new residents. In some New Towns, the Development Corporation also employed Research Officers to look into social provision and the needs and opinions of residents. The size of these teams and the time at which they were set up varied between New Towns but there appears to be little assessment of what approach worked best. **(See lesson 3.1)**

- In order to facilitate new residents' involvement in decision-making, neighbourhood councils and neighbourhood associations were also set up. Voluntary organisations were also seen as a vital means of creating integrated communities (Gray, 1999). In areas where there was an existing Council for Voluntary Service this was used as a starting point. Churches also played an important role. However, most people moving into New Towns had young families, and with the pressures of work, family and settling into a new place, there was often little time for people to get involved in community issues. Those that did have time tended to be women, as they were often not in paid work and therefore had more time to get involved in community issues. **(See lesson 3.2)**

- The Development Corporation recognised that their role was not just to provide jobs and houses for new residents, but they were also responsible for building community facilities and the social infrastructure that goes to make up a 'living community'. Sports facilities were built within communities, rather than on the periphery, and playgrounds and facilities for children were integrated into the neighbourhood. Central to this was the idea of 'walking distance communities', where each neighbourhood would have its own primary school, parade of shops, post office, chemist, church, pub, community centre and sports facilities. Schools played an important role in the community, partly because of the large number of young families moving to the New Towns, but also as the school buildings themselves were used as centres for other social facilities, such as pre-school and health centres. This provision of multiple-use facilities was seen by some (Waterman, 1996) as a key to making walking distance communities work. **(See lesson 3.3)**

- An important factor in the creation of communities is the housing stock that is provided, particularly in terms of tenure (to rent or buy) and provider (public or private sector). Initially most housing in the New Towns was built for rent, with the Development Corporation as the landlord. Access to housing was through the New Towns Development Corporation and the Labour Exchange, and there was therefore some control over the process. Housing management techniques and practices, and provision for tenants therefore had a major influence in the make-up of the community. In later New Towns, partly as a result of shifts in economic climate and government thinking about housing provision, there was a shift towards a greater mix of homes built for owner occupation. Housing policy in Milton Keynes for example aimed for a 50:50 split between private homes for ownership and rental housing, and made a clear commitment to mixing housing types, tenure and occupational groups, within the grid squares (Clapson, 2002). This was in response to earlier New Towns that were dominated by housing for rent, which thus failed to attract the middle-classes. Milton Keynes was therefore characterised by a greater mix of social groups than previous New Towns. There is some evidence from the literature to suggest that the limited mix of housing in some New Towns, in particular the lack of housing for elderly people, prevented truly 'integrated communities' from being created (MacGuire, 1977). Findings suggest that 'cohesive community' requires a balanced age profile. It is also worth noting that New Towns did not generally attract ethnic minority communities, mainly due to ignorance about the housing opportunities available, but also through a desire to remain in established communities in the inner city, as well as the lack of a 'multi-racial image' of the New Towns (CRE, 1980). Research into the case of Harlow New Town shows that the needs of ethnic minority groups were not usually catered for (Wrench et al, 1993). **(See lesson 3.4)**

- Many New Towns were created on greenfield sites, but in most cases there was already at least a small existing community living in the area. In the case of Milton Keynes, the existing population was substantial, at 45,000 inhabitants. Although the evidence is limited, research into the case of Runcorn has suggested that there was some tension between newly arrived residents, and the established community (Morton, 1994). Experience showed that it was important to treat the existing residents as being of equal importance as the new ones and to recognise the strong feelings that the establishment of a New Town can arouse in existing residents. **(See lesson 3.5)**

- The issue of 'how quickly' integrated communities can be created is not addressed in the New Towns literature explicitly. MacGuire (1977) reports that in Telford, by 1977, residents who had lived there "for some time" were beginning to form stable social networks. As Telford was established in the 1960s, this suggests that a time lag of up to 15 years could be expected. However, there is by no means any consistent evidence from different New Town contexts, and it is certainly a question that would benefit from further research. In particular, it would be instructive to look at evidence from outside the New Towns experience which might have more salience for the Growth Areas, for example research into creating communities in private housing developments, the issue of integrated communities in mixed tenure estates, and urban villages.

2. What drew people to New Towns and what keeps their children there?

- The initial motivation for moving to the first generation of New Towns was centred around housing and employment. Coming from sub-standard housing in the inner city, the prospect of spacious individual houses surrounded by green space was a big attraction. Coupled with this was the prospect of employment, and together, these two factors of homes and jobs provided a significant pull for people to move to the New Towns (e.g. Forrest and Kennett (1998) in the context of Harlow).

- However, from the literature reviewed, there appears to have been no research into the question of what keeps the 'second generation' from moving out of New Towns. Further research could be undertaken into this issue, to elucidate the reasons for people becoming attached to New Towns, and not moving elsewhere. Similar further research is also recommended under the theme 'End User Experience', related to affiliation to place.

3. What worked and didn't work in terms of community master planning?

- The term 'community master planning' doesn't appear in the literature, but there were clear attempts to integrate social and physical aspects, largely through the neighbourhood principle of providing 'walking distance communities'.

- Taking 'community master planning' to be defined as the integration of social and physical aspects, the literature identified the following approaches as successful:

- Having a clear idea of the profile of the in-coming population, particularly in terms of demographics.

- Providing for choice. A successful approach was to provide infrastructure that was flexible, so that communities could develop it in a way that suited them in the future.

- Enabling participation in planning of the later phases.

- Those aspects that were less successful included the following:

- Being overly prescriptive in terms of social infrastructure, by providing facilities that weren't easily adaptable.

- The tendency for design and physical issues to dominate the planning process with community/social provision falling off the agenda.

4. How did the physical environment and housing help or hinder the creation of communities?

- Findings highlighted above have addressed many of the issues relating to physical environment and housing, and their role in the creation of communities. Of particular note is the notion of 'walking distance communities' and the important role that local social infrastructure (such as shops, playgrounds and sports facilities) played in creating communities. There is also evidence to suggest that where these facilities were already in place when people began to arrive, the community came together and networks were formed more readily.

- Regarding the issue of zoning, there is mixed evidence for whether the physical separation of uses in the New Towns had an impact on social interaction. Some argue that there were much more powerful forces, such as housing status or socio-economic status, which influenced social interaction and ultimately, community cohesion (Southerton, 2002; Beach, 1995). This issue would benefit from further research.

- In terms of housing, the majority of housing in the first generation of New Towns was built as social housing for rent. Subsequent waves of New Towns aimed to provide a greater mix of housing type and tenure, but there has been little research into whether the different types of housing stock in New Towns had an impact on the creation of communities. As already noted, the lack of housing specifically catering for the elderly population has become a significant issue in some New Towns (Harman and Joy, 1997).

5. How did the provision of education and health facilities help or hinder the creation of communities?

- As noted above, the provision of education facilities was key in the development of New Towns and the creation of communities, as so many of the new comers were families with young children, who had been uprooted from their previous schools, friends and social networks. The Development Corporations had to work hard to provide enough schools and teachers to achieve the objective of having one primary school within each neighbourhood. In the cases where this was not possible, it hindered the integration of communities. The provision of health facilities was also important, in the form of health centres, but less so than education in the creation of communities.

- In terms of delivery, there were some difficulties in joining up different services. Often different services work on different catchment areas or minimum population thresholds, and so putting services together in the same building was often not appropriate. In some cases, partnerships were difficult, which made delivery harder (Waterman, 1996).

- There were also issues about the funding of provision. Service providers argued that they needed extra resources of higher rates to fund provision.

6. *How have the initial communities changed over time, and are there any positive and negative implications to this?*

- The initial communities were disproportionately drawn from younger age groups, with a high proportion of young families in the first intakes. As this cohort has aged, there have been a number of consequences, notably in housing and the suitability of the existing housing stock for elderly people, as well as implications for the health service and facilities.

- However, there does not appear to have been any systematic study of the changing nature of the New Towns population, and the implications of this, either positive or negative. Again, this is an area that would benefit from further research.

7. *What evidence is there relating to the relationship between the New Towns and issues of social inclusion?*

- 'Social inclusion' was not a term used in the New Towns era. Instead, issues were couched in terms of 'mixed' or 'balanced' communities. Different New Towns had different circumstances and approaches. For example, Telford and the New Towns in the North East, where the local economies were not strong, housed a wider mix of people than those in the South East of England. This has brought challenges in terms of inclusion in the present day for New Towns in less prosperous areas.

- Some New Town Development Corporations took on board housing 'the disadvantaged' because they saw it as their duty. In general, however, the way in which people gained access to New Towns meant that they were less likely to be 'excluded'. In many respects, New Towns were seen as an 'exit visa' for the poor and low paid in the city. The phasing out of the New Towns policy could be interpreted as halting the opportunities that they represented for the urban poor (Ward, 2000).

- Ward (2000) raises the issues that some New Towns, in particular Milton Keynes, shifted over time from being inclusive for mainly blue-collar workers moving from cities, to inclusive for executives and overseas employers with the provision of private schools, golf courses, access to international airports etc. This implies that the relationship between New Towns and social inclusion is a complex one and more thought will need to be given to this in terms of the Growth Areas. **(See lesson 3.6)**

8. *What evidence is there for any exacerbation of 'inner city problems' as a consequence of the New Towns?*

- In response to this question, it is difficult to draw firm conclusions, as it is impossible to answer the question of what would have happened to the inner cities if the New Towns hadn't been created.

- Some argue that there is little evidence to suggest that the New Towns policy exacerbated the 'inner city problem'. Firms were decentralising out of the inner cities anyway, due to factors such as space constraints and advances in transport and mobility, which meant a central location was no longer necessary. In turn, through moving out, large sites became available for redevelopment within the inner city, and land values dropped, which contributed positively to the redevelopment potential. The resulting property speculation was as much to blame as the New Towns (Ward, 2000). There is also evidence to suggest that, in terms of population migration, by the mid 1970s, the New Towns only accounted for 17% of the people that left London since 1947 (Lock, 2002).

- However, there is evidence to suggest that the management of the New Towns policy, and its relationship to inner city issues, would have been improved by the existence of a body such as a Regional Development Corporation, which would have given a strategic overview of the policy and its impact, and anticipated any negative consequences that might have resulted.

5.3.3 Key lessons on creating communities

Note on transferability of lessons under creating communities theme:

Transferable lessons are not easy to identify, as the social and economic shifts that have taken place over the past 50 years are fundamental to the transferability of lessons relating to 'creating communities'. Briefly, some of these changes are outlined here:

- New Towns were planned before car ownership was as extensive as it is today. The neighbourhood principle on which they were established therefore has to be considered in light of this.

- Individuals are more geographically mobile today than ever before. Potentially, people identify less with their local community or neighbourhood as a result, and therefore the challenge of creating 'integrated communities' is all the greater.

- Related to this is the commuter lifestyle that many people living in the South East have adopted. New Towns integrated housing and employment provision, and aimed for 'self-containment'. Today many people travel significant distances to get to their place of work. It is not clear whether the Growth Areas will be commuter settlements, or whether there will also be a significant number of jobs created.

- Housing in the New Towns was initially largely rented from a social landlord. This enabled much more centralised planning for communities to be put in place. Today's housing provision is dominated by the private sector, and this will inevitably influence the communities that come to live in the new settlements.

- Women play a very different role in society today than in the 1950s and '60s. Instead of taking the role of home-maker and child-carer, many women today work either full or part time, and this may mean that the lessons from the New Towns relating to communities, creating community networks and participating in 'community building' work during the day, are not transferable to today's context.

- The social and cultural context of society today lies in stark contrast to the climate of the post war years. In the 1950s, the UK was still very much marked by the experiences of war time, and this was reflected in the communalism and spirit of 'shared effort' that imbued the thinking of those moving to and setting up in the New Towns. This contrasts starkly with the zeitgeist of today's society, characterised more by 'individualism' and 'materialism' than 'mend and make do'.

- It is also worth noting that the New Towns were very different in character and context, and these differences can be of equal importance as the universal lessons that emerge.

Nevertheless, some of the lessons to come out of the literature would appear to have relevance to today's context, with the caveat that further research would be needed to test their applicability in the proposed Growth Areas. The lessons that can be drawn are set out in Table 5.3.

Table 5.3: Lessons on community		
	Lessons:	**Comment**
3.1	Guarantees of financial support are essential to provide backing for a large-scale New Town/Growth Area programme, in order to provide confidence, reduce risk, and give credibility to the development.	**Key lesson requiring action**
3.2	Put in place mechanisms for community support and social capital building. This can include community development workers; a 'community chest' for funding small scale community projects; working with the community and voluntary sector; working with church and faith groups; providing resources in terms of buildings, computers etc. In the current climate, a Community Development Trust that could be funded by developer contributions may be considered.	**Key lesson requiring action**
3.3	Harness the support and collaboration of neighbourhood councils, neighbourhood associations and voluntary organisations.	**Key lesson requiring action**
3.4	Social facilities and community infrastructure are key to creating 'walking distance communities'. Liaise at an early date with the LEA re school provision. Education facilities are key to the creation of communities, but in today's housing market, this also implies the provision of affordable key worker housing for teachers to live in the area. It's also important to ensure that local social facilities are already built before the community moves into the area, and that buildings can be multi-use.	**Key lesson requiring action**
3.5	It is important to have a mix of housing stock, in terms of tenures and providers. This will attract a mix of households, although it is also important to establish their requirements, and provide the appropriate facilities and services (families, elderly people, single people etc.). This requires close liaison between the Development Corporation, the District Council, County Council and voluntary organisations.	**Key lesson requiring action**
3.6	There needs to be a consideration of the existing population, treating existing residents as being of equal importance as the new ones. Anticipate, and build a strategy for dealing with resistance to new settlements from the existing community in the area, or from communities nearby.	**Key lesson requiring action**
3.7	There needs to be realism about the socio-economic context in which the Growth Areas are being created. It is likely that the outcomes will be determined more by lifestyles, working patterns, and economics/financial resources, rather than the built form.	**Key lesson requiring awareness**
	At the heart of the lessons is the question "what kind of communities are desirable?". The form of housing tenure will in part dictate the kind of community that will be attracted to live in the Growth Areas, in terms of socio-economic or income group. There is little evidence-based research from the New Towns on issues of housing and its impact on creating communities, but other sources of literature would reveal lessons on housing that would also be useful to the Growth Areas teams.	

5.4 Theme four: Governance

5.4.1 Introduction

The questions addressed from the client's brief under the theme of governance were as follows:

1. *Nature of the governance arrangements initially.*
2. *How have these arrangements changed over time?*
3. *How was the move between special delivery vehicles and normal LA control planned and implemented?*
4. *Are there any positive and negative implications to this?*
5. *What type of leadership was present and how successful was it?*
6. *What type of community involvement was present and how successful was it?*
7. *How much clarity of vision existed and how did this impact on the delivery?*

5.4.2 Summary of points raised by the literature on the theme of governance

1. What was the nature of the governance arrangements initially?

New Town development corporations
(See lessons 4.1, 4.2, 4.3)

- These played the key role in governance (Schaffer, 1970; Osborn and Whittick, 1977; Cullingworth, 1979). They were very powerful unelected nationalised corporations charged with developing the New Town(s) for which they were responsible.

- They (eventually) owned all the land and undertook development. In early New Towns they were the dominant house builders and thus became landlord to most New Town residents.

- In doing all this, they assumed many normal functions of local authorities, including social housing, much infrastructure and amenity provision and planning (Phelps, 1997).

- Each development corporation was run on a day-to-day basis by salaried officials, led by a general manager and reporting to a non-executive chairman and board appointed by the minister responsible for planning.

- Through its chairman and general manager, each development corporation was ultimately responsible to the minister and thence to Parliament.

- Although they had no local democratic accountability, the development corporations undoubtedly saw themselves as enlightened public authorities, highly sensitive to the interests and concerns of New Town citizens.

- This self image reflected their confidence in the advanced professionalism and public service commitment of development corporation officers, who were relatively well paid and enjoyed high status.

- However, it was associated with a rather 'top-down', expert-led style of governance (Buxton, 1986).

Central government
(See lessons 4.1, 4.2, 4.3, 4.5, 4.7, 4.8)

- Central government took the initial decisions to create New Towns, appointed the development corporations, supplied most of the necessary finance and closely scrutinised the work and spending decisions of the corporations (Cullingworth, 1979; Phelps, 1997; Delafons, 1997).

- These activities were split between several central departments and there was no single central point of contact for approval on all matters with which the development corporations were obliged to concern themselves.

- The ministry or department in overall charge of land use planning (principally the Ministry of Housing and Local Government or Department of the Environment) was most involved and exercised the greatest degree of supervision and scrutiny.

- Many ministers liked to involve themselves closely in the New Towns programme, in part because they could readily claim political credit for New Town achievements.

- Matching this close ministerial interest, some of the most able civil servants were also directly involved.

- However, the ministry/department was certainly not all-powerful. The Treasury exercised very close scrutiny of all spending in respect of the New Towns, giving it a hugely important role within the central governance of the New Towns.

- Health and educational provision in the New Towns were the responsibilities of other central ministries.

- Electricity, gas and railways were also the ultimate responsibility of other central ministries, albeit managed by public corporations or area boards.

Local government
(See lessons 4.1, 4.5, 4.9, 4.6, 4.9)

- Although its roles were drastically affected by the New Town development corporations, elective, locally accountable local government continued in the designated New Town areas (Schaffer, 1970; Aldridge, 1979).

- Local government was, almost invariably, in the form of *district authorities*, usually including one which was largely identified with the designated area, and *county authorities*, covering much wider areas.

- Although both (and especially district authorities) were, to some extent, disempowered by the creation of development corporations, they retained significant roles.

- Their elective democratic character allowed them to claim that they more legitimately represented the changing character of the New Town areas and could provide a framework for understanding local concerns.

- The scale of representation of 'New Town interests' on local councils grew as the New Towns developed and incoming populations participated in local elections. Their votes often produced a profound shift in the prevailing political composition of the designated areas and clearly affected the wider counties of which they were part.

- Despite (and in part because of) this representation of 'New Town interests' within local governments, there was usually tension and sometime open hostility between New Town development corporations and local authorities, especially district authorities (Delafons, 1997).

- On very rare occasions this reflected fundamental local opposition to New Town development (e.g. Orlans, 1952), though this was much less significant than might today be expected.

- More typically the tensions were over financial issues related to local authority provision (Aldridge, 1979). This was especially a problem for county councils which had to balance New Town needs against their wider areas. They received extra payments from central government to compensate for additional costs incurred by the New Town but this did not always overcome these difficulties, especially as local government finances came under greater strain in the 1970s.

- However, there was also much insensitivity on the part of development corporations in dealing with local governments, especially the district authorities (e.g. Schaffer, 1970; Balchin, 1980).

Other
(See lessons 4.5)
- Electricity and railways were run by nationalised public corporations, reporting to the relevant central ministries.

- Gas supply was also nationalised, though administered by regional area boards.

- In some cases (e.g. Harlow), water supply was the responsibility of private companies. In most cases, however, this was a local authority responsibility, typically through joint boards of local authority appointees.

- Public transport was provided by a variety of operators, many of which were in various forms of public ownership.

- Hospital provision in New Town areas was the responsibility of regional hospital boards, appointed by the health ministry.

- The wider geographical remits of these other agencies meant that their role in New Town governance had certain similarities with the county councils. However their non-elective character and often direct relationship with different central ministries to those of the New Towns appear sometimes to have exacerbated tensions, for example over hospital provision.

- More generally, however, the leaders of the NTDCs needed considerable persuasive skills to get public utilities and transport providers to bend their programmes to the needs of the New Towns.

2. How did (governance) arrangements change over time?

Local governance
(See lessons 4.3, 4.4, 4.5)

- With central government encouragement, development corporations began to show greater sensitivity to local authority interests.

- This was especially so in the 'partnership' New Towns (Peterborough, Northampton, Warrington) designated in the late 1960s (Aldridge, 1979; Way, 1997).

- Here the local authorities served larger pre-existing populations within the designated areas and were more powerful bodies with stronger technical capacities.

- Local councils gained an automatic right to have members on their respective development corporation boards. However, such members were appointed by the minister rather than actually being true local representatives in the sense of being chosen by the local councils.

- This arrangement appears to have worked well but produced some conflicts of interest between those board members' local and New Town interests (Schaffer, 1970).

- In some cases in these partnership New Towns, local government professional staff undertook key technical roles and took responsibility for important projects in New Town development. There was also joint team working between local and development corporation officers (Way, 1997; Anderson, 1997).

- These examples seem to have been effective in creating a tangible sense of partnership at officer level.

- Despite this (and the more limited moves in the same general direction in other New Towns), relations between development corporations and local authorities often continued to be strained.

- Much of this was because of changes in rules on development corporation land disposals to local authorities and especially the worsening position on both New Town and local government finance during the 1970s. These changes made it more difficult for either party to be responsive to the other.

- Increasing financial strain also created problems within the local authorities in these New Towns, over service levels in parts of their areas undergoing expansion and the older, 'non-New Town' parts of their areas.

- In many other New Towns, traditional jealousies and suspicions between development corporations and district councils also continued, albeit in new guises. For example, the growing use of direct public participation allowed some development corporations to claim a basis for democratic legitimacy that by-passed local elective democracy (e.g. Balchin, 1980).

Central governance
(See lessons 4.6, 4.10)

- Changes in accounting procedures allowed a less close form of central supervision of the development corporations to emerge from the late 1960s (Delafons, 1997).

- The New Town development corporations as a group became more organised (especially following the formation of the New Towns Association) and their dealings with central government began to occur on a more collective and less individual basis.

- Key changes occurred during the 1970s as the New Towns programme was trimmed back with the growing emphasis on the inner city.

- This went much further in the Thatcher years, when New Towns were shifted more into a 'disposals and private development' mode, bringing an accelerated wind up of the whole programme.

3. How was the move between special delivery vehicles and normal local authority control planned and implemented?

- Policy and practice on this evolved in a complex way that reflected both political changes in national government and the changing size and purpose of the New Towns programme.

- In the late 1950s, the Conservative government did not want New Town assets (which were beginning to show profits) passing to what were then predominantly Labour-controlled district local authorities in the New Town areas (Cullingworth, 1979). **(See lesson 4.5)**

- To prevent this (the first New Towns being close to completing their major phase of development at the time), the Commission for the New Towns (CNT) was created in 1961, to assume virtually all New Town assets when development corporations were wound up, a process which began in 1962 (Aldridge, 1979). **(See lessons 4.6 & 4.10)**

- The CNT took over rental housing (and with it major housing subsidies from central government), development land, industrial, and commercial property assets.

- It inherited the planning permissions granted by the NTDCs and was itself a planning authority, exercising planning powers over its own land.

- In today's terms, CNT was originally conceived less as a delivery or disposal vehicle, more a management vehicle, through which New Town financial surpluses could be passed to central government.

- Some development activity was initiated by the CNT on its undeveloped land, either exercising permissions already granted by former NTDCs or itself making fresh planning controls, a situation which often led to tension with local authorities.

- Only non-remunerative community assets created by or in conjunction with development corporations, such as roads, parks, community centres etc were at this stage under any degree of local authority ownership or control. This occurred under both development corporations (in some cases from a very early stage) and the CNT. Many of these assets have proved expensive to maintain.

- Partly because the New Towns programme was expanded in the 1960s but partly also for political reasons, further enlargement of the CNT's portfolio was suspended for many years and the development corporations continued.

- From 1977, local authorities began to assume control for rental housing and related assets from both development corporations and the CNT (Aldridge, 1979; Moss, 1997).

- This shift assumed even greater significance after 1979 when it was combined with an accelerated policy of winding up of the New Towns programme and market disposal of remunerative assets.

- At this point the role of CNT also began to become more central, making it into what would now be called a development and disposal vehicle.

- Meanwhile local authorities were becoming increasingly wary of taking over public housing, despite having pressed for this outcome for many years (Phelps, 1997).

- This reflected shrinking central housing subsidies, growing central pressure to sell off their housing stock on terms that were financially unfavourable to them and the increasingly evident problems with non-traditional development corporation housing (Way, 1997).

- There were comparable problems with other non-remunerative assets such as extensive landscaped open space and road systems many of which were proving more expensive to maintain than more traditional environments. In recognition of this, a practice evolved whereby 'balancing assets' (to generate income) were also transferred to offset some of additional costs that arose from taking over non-remunerative New Town assets. Typical balancing assets were district shopping centres (House of Commons, 2002). **(See lesson 4.6)**

- However, the durability of the remunerative value of these assets proved limited in many cases. Many have become liabilities, especially so in the New Towns in less economically-favoured regions.

- Local authorities have naturally sought to renew these former income streams by promoting redevelopment, or by disposal of what were originally non-remunerative assets for redevelopment. However, claw-back arrangements have meant that any profit passed to the CNT or its successor, English Partnerships (EP). In very recent years, however, EP has waived its rights to claw-back.

- The CNT and its successor EP have retained ownership of the bulk of land left undeveloped by the former NTDCs, much of it with the benefit of planning permissions granted for an indefinite period by the former development corporations.

- Until EP recently agreed to defer to local planning authorities, this last feature acted as a serious limitation on the assumption of development rights by local planning authorities in the former New Towns.

- This had the effect of limiting the responsiveness of the local planning process to changing circumstances and planning agendas. It has also reduced planning application fee income and restricted the ability of local authorities to negotiate public benefits through planning agreements/obligations. However, it appears that this has subsequently changed.

4. Are there any positive and negative implications to this?

Positive

- The Treasury has benefited by an accelerated flow of income from the New Towns to repay its loans and transfer most of the surplus from subsequent disposals to defray central taxes.

- The surpluses derived from New Town development have thus largely returned to the point within government where the initial investment originated.

Negative
(See lessons 4.2, 4.8)

- In so far as there have been costs associated with the final process of disposal and transfer, these have been experienced mainly by the local authorities and communities of the former New Towns.

- In particular, local authorities in the former New Towns have found it more difficult than those elsewhere to act to regenerate their areas in response to economic change and obsolescence problems.

5. What type of leadership was present and how successful was it?

- Much information on New Town leadership relies directly or indirectly on the accounts of those who were actually part of it. Relatively little fully independent research on this matter was ever conducted. It is, though, clear that very strong and determined leadership was evident in the NTDCs. Those in charge showed an exceptionally strong and highly focused commitment to getting things done in the public interest. Their primary and enduring concern was to make the New Towns successful places rather than achieving specific political or electoral goals. Much of the success in actually delivering the New Towns programme can be attributed to this leadership (Schaffer, 1970; Phelps, 1997). **(See lessons 4.8)**

- However, the leadership style was, in general, very 'top-down' (Buxton, 1986). When combined with the personal qualities of actual development corporation leaders in several New Towns, this helped foster an often strained (and sometimes hostile) relationship with local government leaders in the New Town areas (e.g. Balchin, 1980).

- On the other hand, the leaders of NTDCs also had to deal with other agencies (such as public utilities, transport providers etc.) who essentially needed to be persuaded to adjust their own programmes to New Town requirements.

There were several elements in development corporation leadership:

Chair
(See lesson 4.8)

- The post of Chair was a non-executive part-time post though often a very important one in the governance of the New Towns and bridging the gap between New Town development corporations and other bodies and interests (Phelps, 1997).

- Chairs were largely, though not exclusively, male. They came from a variety of backgrounds, spanning local government (usually in big cities), Lord Lieutenants of counties, business and commerce. A few had directly relevant professional experience. Several were members of the House of Lords.

- Actual incumbents interpreted their roles differently, from monarchical through ambassadorial to very 'hands-on'.

- It is not clear from published research which types were the most effective.

General managers
(See lesson 4.8)

- Whatever the style favoured by the Chair, much of the direct responsibility for running the New Town development corporations during the major development phase fell squarely on their general managers (Buxton, 1986; Phelps, 1997).

- These men (and they were all men) were central to establishing (not least through personal example) the key features of the development corporation style of New Town governance.

- The general managers showed strong commitment to getting things done in the public interest, an exceptionally strong sense of personal responsibility for their actions and great loyalty to their particular New Town.

- They demanded (and largely got) similar qualities of their staff in the development corporations. For example, 'going public' about New Town problems was certainly not encouraged. On the other hand, however, corruption and financial malpractice were almost completely absent (Way, 1997).

- The persons appointed as first general managers of newly established development corporations had the biggest impact in setting the tenor of the organisations (Phelps, 1997).

- For the first generation of New Towns, these founding general managers were predominantly drawn from the senior ranks of the armed forces.

- Several later New Towns had former colonial civil servants as general managers.

- Other general managers, usually of the later New Towns, came from various other career backgrounds, including local government.

- Replacements for the first general managers in development corporations were normally drawn from existing staff, usually the chief finance or legal officers.

Boards

- There were great variations in the effectiveness and focus of New Town boards as agencies for governance (Schaffer, 1970; Phelps, 1997).

- Board members worked on a one day a week basis, so that their impact was generally much less than either Chair or general managers.

- They were appointed by the Minister/Secretary of State responsible for the New Towns.

- In later New Towns, local government appointees were more common, in some cases being virtually direct nominees of the local authority in the New Town area.

- In some cases board members were appointed for political reasons, to counteract interests favoured by a previous administration.

- However there were several who were appointed to reflect their particular skills, for example in relevant design or land professions, or in personnel management.

- A few appointees were seemingly chosen solely for presentational reasons.

- The level of involvement of boards with the day-to-day governance of the New Towns varied greatly.

- Some more active boards had several sub-committees, increasing the direct level of engagement of board members with governance.

- Some boards showed great interest in the pastoral care of incoming populations, concerned that they settled in properly and generally had a positive experience of the New Towns.

- It is not clear from research what, if any, impact these variations in board composition, practice and level of activity had on the overall success of the New Towns.

Local authorities
(See lesson 4.5)

- As already indicated, the New Town development corporations often had tense relationships with local authorities.

- Research literature tends to be written largely from the standpoint of the development corporations, so that local authority leadership tended to be commented on favourably where it was more sympathetic to the development corporations.

- This seems to have been particularly the case in the partnership New Towns, especially where there was a strong local party political consensus in favour of the New Town (e.g. Way, 1997).

Central government
(See lesson 4.2)

- New Towns benefited by generally strong governmental commitment to the New Towns programme (Delafons, 1997).

- This brought close ministerial and senior civil servant interest and pressure on development corporations to become demonstration projects for the latest central initiatives.

- This central involvement was partly responsible for some of the least successful aspects of the New Towns, particularly the predilection for non-traditional housing systems during the 1960s and early 1970s.

6. *What type of community involvement was present and how successful was it?* **(See lesson 4.9)**

- Most literature on the New Towns tends to represent 'the community' merely as an object of NTDC actions, another aspect of the New Town that had to be 'developed' by corporation officers.

- The very fact of beginning when most of the eventual New Town 'community' were not actually present, placed objective limits on community involvement possibilities as compared to normal towns.

- It should also be recognised that the New Towns were initiated and substantially developed in a period of much greater social deference than today, when most of the population did not readily question the judgements of those in positions of authority.

- The above points make it rather difficult to make a balanced assessment of community involvement in governance. However, some observations can be made.

- Concerning the pre-existing communities in designated areas, central government and NTDCs learnt from the public relations disaster that marked the early days of the first New Town at Stevenage (Orlans, 1952; Gold and Ward, 1994). NTDCs soon recognised the need to maintain a regular flow of local public information about their New Towns for both pre-existing and incoming populations.

- This involved initiatives such as specific NTDC newsletters and strong encouragement to existing local newspapers. The social development departments of NTDCs were very important in these efforts to encourage community development and cohesion (Schaffer, 1970).

- Social development and housing departments often became channels of communication between community concerns and the development corporation.

- Amongst the 'New Towners' themselves, tenants associations were often the first expression of autonomous community action.

- Other community organisations were created with the encouragement of social development officers and sometimes also the active involvement of voluntary agencies such as the churches.

- While mainly significant for community cohesion, this growing 'associational density' also had implications for governance by creating more opportunities for community leadership and creating demands for needs for space to meet.

- NTDCs were also quick to adopt the principles of public participation in planning which were encouraged from the late 1960s.

- More generally, they showed themselves eager to take every opportunity to respond to, support (and publicise) local community events of almost any type.

- Effective arrangements to organise and involve communities in governance often helped NTDCs in their negotiations with other agencies to secure better facilities for the New Towns.

- In a few cases NTDCs could thereby present themselves as champions of the community against an unsympathetic state (in relation to the long awaited hospital at Milton Keynes, for example) (Clapson, Dobbin and Waterman, 1998).

- In addition to development corporation officers, board members, particularly if they had local government connections in the area, might become a bridge between communities and the development corporation.

- In some New Towns, the annual public meeting by the Chair also became a valuable forum for governance issues to be raised and debated (Schaffer, 1970).

- Local authorities were another vehicle for articulating community concerns with the advantage of providing a formal elective element to allow representation of the new communities. As noted, however, relations with the NTDCs were often strained.

- Generally the NTDCs felt they were successful in involving communities in governance. It is difficult to test this impression on the basis of existing research. However, the New Towns appear to have more community organisations than areas of older cities with comparable socio-economic characteristics (e.g. Clapson, 2004).

7. How much clarity of vision existed and how did this impact on delivery?

- The New Towns were characterised by a very great clarity of vision within the NTDCs which undoubtedly had a very positive effect on delivery.

- However, it should be stressed that this would have been less likely to have been the case if NTDCs had not been such powerful bodies which also possessed so many of the means to deliver the vision. **(See lessons 4.7 & 4.8)**

5.4.3 Key lessons on governance

These are *provisional lessons*. They are based on the present team's judgements which have been reached through an *interpretation* of research about the New Towns. Research into the New Towns programme was not undertaken with the Sustainable Communities Growth Areas programme in mind. Naturally therefore the findings of the New Towns research were not focused towards this specific future need for lessons.

Table 5.4: Lessons on Governance		
	Lessons:	**Comment**
	Power and responsibilty:	
4.1	Clarity of responsibilities for delivery and related governance in the Growth Areas will be essential, especially so since delivery partnerships will be far looser entities with more diffused power structures than those which characterised the New Towns programme.	**Key lesson requiring action**
4.2	There may need to be a conscious trade-off between strong leadership of the delivery bodies and local democratic accountability.	**Key lesson requiring awareness**
4.3	More diffused partnership structures will not automatically be more democratically accountable (to anyone) than were the New Town development corporations if the real location of power and responsibility is mystified by the partnership form itself.	**Secondary lesson requiring awareness**
	Working with partners:	
4.4	It may be expected that relations between delivery bodies and local authorities will be less strained in the Growth Areas than they were in many New Towns.	**Secondary lesson requiring awareness**
4.5	However, despite the different arrangements and greater good will that was apparent in the partnership New Towns, tensions between local authorities and delivery bodies were still present and can be expected also to arise in the Growth Areas.	**Secondary lesson requiring awareness**
4.6	Changes on wider matters (such as finance) may particularly affect the ability of partners to be fully responsive to each other in delivering and running the Growth Areas, as they did in the New Towns.	**Key lesson requiring awareness**
	Leadership:	
4.7	Historical evolution in the wider nature of leadership within society means that the leadership arrangements of growth area partnerships will clearly not replicate that of the New Towns.	**Key lesson requiring action**
4.8	The same qualities of determination, strong commitment to the public interest, ability to cajole other agencies into compliance with New Town requirements and unequivocal acceptance of responsibility for their actions remain highly relevant if the Growth Areas are to achieve their goals.	**Key lesson requiring awareness**
	Community involvement:	
4.9	Delivery partnerships should pay at least as much attention as did the New Town development corporations to ensuring high levels of public information about the Growth Areas for circulation within (and outside of) the areas.	**Key lesson requiring action**
4.10	Though society has certainly changed with 'social development' now seen as symptomatic of a 'nanny state', the development partnerships should still provide active support to promote and encourage autonomous community activity and leadership.	**Key lesson requiring action**
4.11	Development partnerships will be an essential element in the long-term health of the Growth Areas as real places.	**Key lesson requiring action**
	The transition to 'normal' governance:	
4.12	In moving beyond the major delivery phase, hand over arrangements should be carefully considered to avoid inadvertently handicapping successor agencies.	**Key lesson requiring awareness**

5.5 Theme five: Economic achievement and competitiveness

5.5.1 Introduction

This section presents findings from a review of the literature on the topic of economic achievement and competitiveness. Within this, and basing our analysis on the client's brief, the following questions were used to provide a framework for analysing the literature.

1. *What influence has the physical and economic location of New Towns had on their economic success or failure?*
2. *Could the economic success of individual New Towns been predicted based on their initial location?*
3. *What were the links to and impact on the regional economy? How important was this? Relative importance of links to and impacts on regional economy.*
4. *What degree of self-containment or permeability was most successful to the economy initially and over time?*
5. *What was the impact, both positive and negative, of the NTs on issues of development and regeneration locally and regionally?*
6. *What was the role of the private sector?*
7. *What were the factors that encouraged private sector involvement (size, governance, government commitment)?*
8. *Are there viable alternatives to business sector incentives?*
9. *How were NTs marketed, and what effect did this have on their success?*

Locational factors

1. What influence has the physical and economic location of NTs had on their economic success or failure?

- The basic economics of the NTs was that land could be bought at agricultural values by the government and then transformed into urban values by the NTDCs. This view was expressed in the Final Report of the New Towns Committee that argued that large scale comprehensive development, on land bought at agricultural price levels, would, over a long period of time, pay its way, if not make a profit.

- This was based on Ebenezer Howard's vision (1902), which supported the view that large-scale comprehensive development of land bought at agricultural prices could be profitable. He realised that this would incur extra infrastructure costs – in terms of facilities ranging from drainage to schools. He also recognised that the period required for comprehensive development would demand great faith on the part of investors. **(See lesson 5.1)**

- But on the credit side of the balance sheet new urban values would be created, and Howard envisaged that the Garden City corporation would capture these urban values for the public purse.

- The financial successes of the first generation of NTs, exemplified by Harlow, demonstrated that Howard's basic idea – that large-scale comprehensive urban development of undeveloped land could be profitable to the public purse – could be made to work in practice. The constraints placed on the second and third generation of NTs and the relatively short period allowed for their development makes it difficult to make a proper evaluation of their economic performance. But it seems likely that at least Milton Keynes will be counted as a financial success – even after the enormous deficits of the 1970s and 1980s. **(See lesson 5.6)**

- In addition to the basic principle of turning land bought at cheap agricultural prices into publicly owned and much more valuable urban land, the first generation of NTs were also started in a favourable macro-economic environment. In the 1950s and 1960s the economic conditions of low interest rates, relatively low inflation, and full employment provided a favourable economic environment for New Town development. The NTDCs were allowed to carry out their work with a remarkable degree of independence from central government, and were able to provide housing and employment opportunities in what was otherwise a parsimonious era. **(See lesson 5.2)**

- Every component of this favourable environment changed in the 1970s and 1980s. The NTDCs gradually forgot about Howard's ideas, and did not protest at the loss of control of their housing assets resulting from the 1972 Housing Finance Act. In an era which enjoyed more affluence but suffered from growing levels of unemployment the NTDCs found a growing number of competitors – the inner city, other towns, and even other NTs seeking to attract or retain employment. In the 1970s both interest rates and inflation soared, but the property market stagnated. The combination of high interest rates and the changed economic environment led to growing financial deficits and the NT's programme was effectively brought to a premature end in 1986. **(See lessons 5.2, 5.4, 5.5)**

- In some ways the economics of the NTs combined with the macro-economic environment in which they were started were a more significant influence on their relative economic success than their physical locations. **(See lesson 5.2)**

2. Could the economic success of individual NTs be predicted on the basis of their initial location?

- The physical location of the NTs did not turn out to be a particularly good predictor of their economic success. One report by Henley Centre Local Futures placed Warrington in the top 25 boom towns in Britain along with Milton Keynes and more traditionally prosperous areas like Newbury, Surrey Heath and South Cambridgeshire in 1994. **(See lesson 5.6)**

- Early employment growth in the 1960s and 1970s was spread evenly across all the New and Expanded Towns. Among the NTs for example, Basildon, East Kilbride, Harlow, Skelmersdale and Washington are worth singling out as having grown rapidly (over the period as a whole) and Warrington, Central Lancashire, and Hatfield as towns where growth has been particularly disappointing. Thetford and Cramlington have experienced the fastest growth among the Expanded Towns. But the main point, taking all the towns together, is that manufacturing employment has expanded considerably. Indeed the relative growth in the New and Expanded Towns – nearly 250,000 jobs – is as large for example as the total estimated impact of regional economic policy on the assisted areas of the UK during roughly the same period.

- During the same period there was also a marked urban to rural shift in manufacturing employment that far outweighed any contribution to decentralisation made by the NTs on their own. The magnitude of this shift is shown in Table 5.1. **(See lessons 5.5 & 5.6)**

Table 5.1: Manufacturing employment change by type of area in central and peripheral regions 1960-78 (% 1960 manufacturing employment in each area)			
	Southern England	Peripheral regions	
		Development areas	Other areas
Large towns	+7.2	−10.2	−20.8
Small towns	+18.7	+15.7	−6.5
Rural area	+43.7	+27.8	+4.3
Source: Fothergill, S., Kitson, M. and Monk, S. (1983) *The impact of the new and expanded town programmes on industrial location in Britain*, Regional Studies, Vol. 17.4, p. 256.			

- It also has to be said that employment in the NTs proved to be just as vulnerable to recession as that in other areas. In 1971 unemployment in the NTs was lower than in other parts of England and Wales, but in 1981, when the economy was suffering from severe recession, the level of unemployment in the NTs was higher than in other areas. It seems likely that the New Town industry is generally more buoyant than that elsewhere – more responsive to both booms and recessions in the national economy. **(See lessons 5.2 & 5.4)**

Regional factors

3. What were the links to and impact on the regional economy? How important was this? Relative importance of links to and impacts on regional economy.

- The NTs had an impact on the regional economies in which they were located. In particular manufacturing employment growth in the New and Expanded Towns was substantial.

- The growth of employment in the first generation NTs is well documented. A study of London's eight NTs covering the period up to 1966 showed that they had been more successful in attracting employment than in accommodating population growth and that they were exceptionally self contained as far as journeys to work were concerned (Thomas 1969). A later study showed that employment on the twelve NTs in England and Wales increased by 222,000 over the period 1951 to 1971.

- Between 1960-78 manufacturing in the NTs rose by more than 80,000 to over 400,000 in total; in the Expanded Towns the increase was 100,000 to just under 300,000 jobs in total. These increases were proportionately large – a rise of over 25% in the NTs, and over 50% in the Expanded Towns – especially in the context of an 11.5% fall in national manufacturing employment during the same period.

- Up to 1974 the New and Expanded Towns grew rapidly, relative to Britain as a whole, with the NTs showing the largest growth up to 1967 and the Expanded Towns thereafter. After 1974 there was a change. Not only did manufacturing employment begin to decline in these towns, but they no longer fared so much better than the national average. Indeed, relative to the national average the New and Expanded Towns together gained not much more than 3,000 jobs a year between 1974-78 – only about one-fifth of the average relative growth in earlier years. **(See lesson 5.6)**

- The other half of the relative growth of employment in these towns must be attributed to the urban-rural shift, not policy. In so far as the New and Expanded Towns have been successful in increasing their employment, this is to a large extent because manufacturing jobs have shifted towards small towns and rural areas throughout the country. **(See lesson 5.6)**

- Two main conclusions may be made.

  - The first is that though manufacturing employment growth in the New and Expanded Towns between 1960-78 was well above the national average – a difference accounting for nearly 250,000 jobs – only about half of this relative growth can be attributed to public policy. The remainder of the growth was part of the shift of jobs from cities to small towns which occurred throughout Britain, independently of the New and Expanded Town programmes.

  - The second main conclusion is that the influence of the programmes on industrial location has diminished over time. Indeed, taking all New and Expanded Towns together, after 1974 the programmes had no discernible effect on the location of manufacturing jobs. Insofar as these towns continue to experience growth in manufacturing, this is entirely because of the wider urban-rural shift in industrial location that occurred. **(See lesson 5.6)**

- So the NTs have had rather less of an economic impact on their regions than is often supposed.

4. *What degree of self-containment or permeability was most successful to the economy initially and over time?*

- The creation of self-contained and balanced communities does not cover all the objectives set for the NTs. The designations of Basildon, Telford and Washington were motivated by the requirement to clear up various land use problems which were costly to deal with. Many of the development corporations undertook ancillary schemes that had benefits for places outside the designated area.

- Neither was the goal of self-contained and balanced communities set for all New Towns. The designations of Hatfield, Corby, and Aycliffe were for housing for the workers for existing employment centres, and the development in these towns did not initially have the same opportunity to make money from industrial and commercial property as did Harlow and most other NTs. But getting employment became a goal even in those cases like Hatfield, Corby and Aycliffe when the initially established employment base faltered or collapsed. This was linked both to the dependence of some NTs on particular employment providers and on more general recessionary factors. **(See lessons under Physical Design theme: size)**

- Most of the NTs are centres of employment. They draw workers from the surrounding areas rather than fulfil the role of suburban satellite.

- Many of the second and third generation of NTs were employment centres in the sense that they were daily importers of labour – as indicated by jobs ratios greater than 100. This reflects a change in NT policy whereby many of the second and third generation NTs – such as Central Lancashire, Northampton, Warrington and Peterborough – were already major centres of employment.

- In the early periods of the development of the first generation of NTs there were substantial increases in the index of commuting independence associated with many migrants making decisions to live and work in the NT. This pattern was maintained by Milton Keynes over 1971 – 1981 where the index of commuting independence increased significantly. But elsewhere the index declined. The NTs followed the pattern of other areas where the growth of car ownership contributed to a growing proportion of longer journeys crossing local administrative boundaries. **(See lesson 5.6)**

- In many cases the NTs are not large enough to be self-contained urban units. If we accept the general proposition that the lowest per capita costs exist over the population range 50,000 – 250,000, it would seem that most of the early NTs were too small to achieve their full growth potential or self-containment – a theoretical conclusion which appears to be confirmed by empirical evidence. **(See lessons under Physical Design theme: size)**

- There are theoretical and empirical grounds for expecting larger cities to offer substantial benefits to industrialists in the form of productivity gains from agglomeration economies and indeed most of our economic growth is urban based.

5. *What was the impact, both positive and negative, of the NTs on issues of development and regeneration locally and regionally?*

- Fothergill et al (1982) conclude that employment growth in the NTs has not been at the expense of employment in the conurbations. Could it be said that the growth of employment in the NTs was autonomous and so, by stimulating economic growth, generally contributed to the growth of employment and the reduction of unemployment in other areas? It is impossible to provide a wholly convincing answer to such questions. But it can be said the NTs have been particularly successful in attracting firms from other countries – such as the US and Japan. The NTs also have been successful in attracting high technology industries. According to Begg (1991) the 23 NTs in England and Wales provided a high proportion of new-technology jobs: more than half of the top areas in Britain in 1989 were NTs. **(See lesson 5.3)**

- For nearly thirty years the New and Expanded Town programmes commanded the support of successive governments, a support matched in the case of the NTs by large allocations of funds from the Exchequer, and it was not until the inner city problems rose to prominence in the late 1970s that the New and Expanded Towns began to fall out of favour. Superficially, the programmes also appear to have had considerable success. In 1981 the NTs, for example, had a population of 2,049,000, compared with 946,000 on designation, and provided jobs for 950,000 people. **(See lessons 5.2 & 5.3)**

- However, despite the obvious importance of the New and Expanded Towns programmes in framing the post-war distribution of population and employment in Britain there has been remarkably little analysis of their impact. True, there has been much description of the programmes, the aims, methods and planning philosophies on which they are based (Cullingworth, 1979, for example). And there have been detailed studies of several individual NTs. But there has not been any attempt to disentangle the separate effect of the New and Expanded Town programmes from the wider locational shifts that occurred during the same period.

- Now that the programmes have been curtailed, it is useful to have a measure of their impact on employment in the conurbations in order to assess the likely effect of the current change in policy.

- The best guide to the employment change, which would have occurred in the New and Expanded Towns in the absence of policy, is the employment change in towns of similar size. The issue of size is crucial because most New and Expanded Towns are small towns, and throughout the country during the 1960s and 1970s small towns experienced growth in manufacturing employment well above the national average. So far as the New and Expanded Towns are concerned, the implication is that part of the growth observed may be attributable to this wider 'urban-rural shift' rather than to policy. Therefore in order to measure the effect of policy it is first necessary to disentangle the effect of this shift.

- The improvement in growth with decreasing settlement size forms the basis of estimates of the employment change that would have occurred in the New and Expanded Towns in the absence of policy.

- Even with estimates of the impact of policy on the New and Expanded Towns themselves, we cannot be sure where the jobs were diverted from, and if they were diverted out of the conurbations, whether this growth could in any case have occurred in the conurbations. It has been argued (Fothergill, Kitson and Monk 1982) that the dominant problem responsible for the relative decline of industry in the conurbations was the lack of room for physical expansion. So one view is that much of the expansion, which was diverted to the New and Expanded Towns, could not have occurred in Britain's conurbations, and has not therefore been at the expense of employment in these places. **(See lesson 5.6)**

- The New and Expanded Town programmes have probably had only a small impact upon employment in the conurbations. Over the period as a whole the total loss of manufacturing jobs from London and the other six conurbations was huge – almost 1.2 million jobs – while the impact of the New and Expanded Town programmes was little more than one-tenth of this size. On this basis, over half of the jobs diverted by policy to the new and Expanded Towns were at the expense of London, but the overall loss of jobs there was so large – nearly 570,000 – that the decline remained enormous even after adding back the jobs lost to New and Expanded Towns. This conclusion is consistent with Dennis's (1978) finding that between 1966-1974 factory movement to the New and Expanded Towns accounted for only 7% of the decline in manufacturing employment in London.

Fothergill, Kitson and Monk (1982) argued that the dominant problem responsible for the relative decline of industry in the conurbations was the lack of room for physical expansion. So our view is that much of the expansion which was diverted to the New and Expanded Towns could not have occurred in Britain's conurbations and was therefore not at the expense of employment in these places.

Table 5.2: Estimates of the impact of the New and Expanded Town Programme on manufacturing employment in the designated towns, 1960-78

	Actual change	Expected change	% 1960 Manufacturing employment	
Estimate A				
New Towns	+84,000	+28,000	+56,000	(+17.3)
Expanded Towns	+100,000	+38,000	+62,000	(+31.6)
Estimate B				
New Towns	+84,000	+19,000	+65,000	(+20.1)
Expanded Towns	+100,000	+27,000	+73,000	(+37.2)
Source: Fothergill, S., Kitson, M. and Monk, S. (1983) *The impact of the new and expanded town programmes on industrial location in Britain*, Regional Studies, Vol. 17.4, p. 256.				

- The results shown in Table 5.3 show that the New and Expanded Town programmes probably only had a small impact upon employment in the conurbations.

Table 5.3: Possible impact of the New and Expanded Town programmes on manufacturing employment in the conurbations 1960-78

	Employment change		Impact of New and Expanded Town Programmes	Employment change minus impact of NT and Expanded Town programmes	
	No.	%	No.	No.	%
London	−569,000	−42.5	−79,000	−490,000	−36.6
West Midlands	−176,000	−24.3	−21,000	−155,000	−21.4
Merseyside	−46,000	−21.2	0	−46,000	−21.2
Manchester	−178,000	−30.7	0	−178,000	−30.7
Tyneside	−27,000	−18.6	−19,000	−8,000	−5.5
Clydeside	−100,000	−28.0	−20,000	−80,000	−22.4
West Yorkshire	−78,000	−30.1	0	−78,000	−30.1
−1,174,000	−32.4	−139,000	−1,035,000	−28.6	
Source: Fothergill, S., Kitson, M. and Monk, S. (1983) *The impact of the new and expanded town programmes on industrial location in Britain*, Regional Studies, Vol. 17.4, p. 258.					

- Clydeside and the West Midlands lost some jobs to the New and Expanded Towns, though again the number was small in relation to overall losses in these places. Merseyside and Manchester, on the other hand, did not appear to have lost jobs, despite the location of several New and Expanded Towns in surrounding areas, because in total the growth of these towns in North West England has been particularly disappointing. Tyneside, the smallest of the conurbations, is the only one where nearby New and Expanded Towns may have made much difference to the rate of decline.

We conclude that even on extreme assumptions the jobs, which have been diverted by policy to the New and Expanded Towns, represent a very small proportion of the total decline in manufacturing employment in the conurbations. **(See lesson 5.6)**

Private sector

6. What was the role of the private sector?

- The key role of the private sector in the NTs was the provision of economic activity and employment. As a result, many of the NTs have become major new employment centres and in recent years have led the way in attracting overseas companies. Telford Development Corporation policy evolved towards the pursuit of overseas investors. Through the 1970s and into the 1980s the generation and retention of local inward investment proved increasingly difficult, existing manufacturing and extractive industries inherited from the old industrial settlements continued to decline and the mismatch between housing and community development and employment provision in Telford worsened.

- In contrast, NTs such as Glenrothes, Peterlee and Corby based upon single traditional employers, all had to come to terms with the decline in their traditional industry and diversify their employment bases.

- A number of NTs have had problems with their employment structures. In Redditch there was concern about the large proportion of jobs in defence and the motor industry. Runcorn expressed concern over the town's high dependence on the chemical industry. Stevenage was rightly worried about its overdependence on the aerospace industry. **(See lesson 5.3)**

- The NTs proved to be particularly attractive to high-technology employers. Begg found that more than half the top urban areas in terms of high-technology employment in 1989 were NTs.

- Launched by John Gummer in 1993, the 'Invest in Success' competition – a joint initiative between the Commission for New Towns and the Association of District Councils was designed to unlock pent-up potential in the 21 English New Towns by encouraging a partnership approach to funding economic and community development projects.

- The CNT is making land or premises available to developers of winning schemes at values which reflect the ability of each scheme to pay. Where this is less than the market value, submissions had to demonstrate that they could not go ahead at higher land values. In some case the CNT intends to release land at nil value.

- The schemes offered opportunities for New Town authorities to develop important projects with other partners. The Invest in Success formula should encourage further significant private sector investment in the 21 English NTs. Although a small scale initiative at the time this kind of approach might encourage private investment in future large scale developments. **(See lesson 5.1)**

7. What were the factors that encouraged private sector involvement (size, governance, government commitment)?

- The NT programme involved both public bodies and private interests in the large scale conversion of land from agricultural to urban use. Windfall gains to property owners and the award of large contracts to private construction companies are an inescapable part of such a process. Some of the NTDCs made massive profits and some made heavy losses. **(See lesson 5.1)**

- Government investment in the physical and social infrastructure of New Towns has in turn stimulated private sector involvement, resulting in NTs becoming economic growth zones that consistently outperform many areas of the country. **(See lesson 5.1)**

- An established feature of the local labour markets in the NTs that was reinforced by the dynamic of inward investment was low wages. Telford has had a long-standing reputation for low wages compared with those paid in the West Midlands conurbation and especially those in such leading engineering centres as Birmingham and Coventry. **(See lesson 5.1)**

- In Skelmersdale there was criticism of the old Development Corporation's policy of only allowing manufacturing jobs to locate in the town. Most NTs needed greater diversification in their sectoral structures. **(See lesson 5.3)**

- Private sector involvement was encouraged by the mainspring of long-term financial commitment by central government. Large scale, long-term financial commitment by government was a key factor that encouraged private sector involvement in the NTs.

8. Are there viable alternatives to business sector incentives?

- There is a major gap in the literature on this subject.

Marketing

8. How were NTs marketed, and what effect did this have on their success?

- Most produced promotional materials issued by the DCs projecting an image of their towns that remained rooted in the dominant ideology, but which was aimed at groups such as industrialists or the inhabitants of the region or NTs themselves. It was designed to convince these groups how advantageous it was or would be for them to be located in the NT. Inevitably, and of necessity, rather different images are projected at these various groups.

- The promotional activities of the DCs were particularly marked since the early 1960s. In 1962 T. Dan Smith was appointed as Public Relations Consultant to Peterlee DC and in 1967 to that of Newton Aycliffe.

- What is missing here is any systematic analysis of what, if any, effects all the promotional literature and marketing had on the relative success or indeed failures of the NTs. This is another major gap in the literature.

5.5.3 Key lessons from the literature on economic achievement and competitiveness

Preliminary explanatory note regarding lessons on this theme:

The initial success of the NTs was based on the public translation of land values from those of agricultural values to those associated with urban uses. This is a key 'hidden' subsidy that has been used elsewhere (e.g. Shannon DC) to encourage the establishment of private sector economic activity.

A second element in their success was the national macro-economic conditions of the period in which the first generation was developed. Low interest rates and low inflation combined with economic growth and an urban-rural shift, especially in manufacturing industry, meant that they were essentially working with the grain of their contemporary economic environment.

Third, the early post-war period is often seen as the era of nationalisation and central control, and the creation of the NTDCs could well be interpreted as an act of nationalisation. But the programme was very decentralised in that initially the DCs enjoyed a high degree of autonomy from central government control. But that autonomy was removed step by step.

Fourth, in the contemporary knowledge-based economy the wage suppression common in the first generation of NTs would be counterproductive. What is required today is a high quality and high wage local economy.

Fifth, eventually Government policies moved against many of the ideas expressed in the NTs. Howard's economic ideas emphasised local control, but government policies became more centralised during the period of the programme. The essence of NT planning, and any other kind of land use planning, is to take a long-term perspective, but as the programme developed government policies became more short term in the perspective adopted.

Sixth, the regional effects of the NTs were probably less than is commonly supposed. Only part of the growth in the New and Expanded Towns may be attributable to the planned decentralisation of industry. In attempts to evaluate regional economic policy it has frequently been argued that the proper measure of the impact of policy is neither absolute growth in the assisted areas nor growth relative to the country as a whole, but the difference between the change which actually occurred and the change which would have occurred in the absence of policy. The same logic applies to the new and Expanded Town programmes. The impact of policy on these towns is properly measured as the difference between the growth that occurred in these towns and the growth which would have occurred if they had not been designated as New and Expanded Towns. The problem in measuring the impact of the New and Expanded Town programmes therefore concerns the choice of an appropriate standard against which to compare the towns. By how much would they have grown – or declined – in the absence of policy?

	Table 5.5: Lessons on Economic Achievement and Competitiveness	
	Lessons:	**Comment**
5.1	For development to stimulate and encourage private sector economic activity, some form of subsidy, in terms of reduced land values for example, may need to be considered.	**Key lesson requiring action**
5.2	Expectations of impact of new development must take into account current fiscal, interest and inflation context and whether the style of development (in scale, anticipated uses, location etc.) is working with this context or against it.	**Key lesson requiring awareness**
5.3	All cities in England now suffer from a lack of local powers and too much political and financial control from central government. A key lesson from the NTs is that successful local economic development requires the kind of strong local powers and financial capabilities of the early NTDCs.	**Key lesson requiring action**
5.4	The government needs to be thinking about a long-term economic strategy, not just short-term policies on interest rates, wage suppression and inflation.	**Key lesson requiring awareness**
5.5	Economic assumptions about performance of large scale development need to be robust enough to anticipate and build in ways of coping with changing government policies.	**Key lesson requiring awareness**
5.6	Economic assumptions about performance of large scale development need to be robust enough to anticipate and build in ways of coping with changing government policies.	**Key lesson requiring action**
5.7	The impact of new, large scale development is almost impossible to predict, and using the NTs experience as a proxy is highly problematic.	**Key lesson requiring awareness**

5.6 Theme six: Physical environment and design/master-planning

5.6.1 Introduction

This section presents findings from a review of the literature on the topic of physical environment and design, including master-planning. Within this, and basing our analysis on the client's brief, the questions below were used to provide a framework for analysing the literature. These include issues of process as well as urban design – layout, transport infrastructure/road and path configuration and architectural style. We have also identified an additional sub-theme that the literature touches on, and that is the role of public art in the New Towns.

Whilst this is not the place to provide a detailed account of the design aspects of the New Towns, it should be noted that it is well recognised that there were major changes in the design thinking and ideology between the early and later NTs. In particular, the influence of modernism, both in relation to style and to the notion of an efficient disaggregation of land uses was replaced by a greater concern with local identity and the mixing of uses. Changing attitudes to the relationship between roads and built form was an additional major factor in design thinking – with what would be seen in urban design terms today as the unhelpful influence of both the Buchanan Report *Traffic in Towns* in 1963, and Design Bulletin 32 *Residential Roads and Footpaths* (DB 32) originally published in 1977 (revised 1992).

On the more general theme of master-planning as a process, whilst there may have been significant local differences in approach between the different New Towns, the dominant process of design was top-down, based on the creation of an overall plan at the outset, at different scales of resolution. The more recent model of coding or design frameworks able to provide more flexible and dynamic responses to local circumstances and changing needs was not a marked feature in any of the New Towns.

The questions raised in the brief relating to the theme of community creation were:

1. *How big is big enough for a New Town?*
2. *What was the role of landscaping, public spaces and liveability in the success or otherwise of New Towns?*
3. *What are the long-term maintenance issues?*
4. *What was the role of master-planning? Did it work? Did it change over time, e.g. with the transfer from UDCs to LA control?*
5. *To what extent have the distinctive design and layout patterns of the New Towns been a key issue for their success? What aspects have been less successful?*
6. *How environmentally sustainable and bio diverse are the New Towns?*
7. *Has the design of New Towns influenced transport patterns? In what ways? E.g. dependence on cars versus public transport*
8. *How have the available strategic transport links between New Towns and other centres influenced their economic development and levels of sustainability?*
9. *Have the original design and/or layout frustrated later development?*
10. *What was the intended role of green space? How was/is it managed?*
11. *To what degree was local and sub-regional identity and distinctiveness considered in the New Towns programme?*

An additional question is:
12. *What role did public art play in place making, and how was it managed?*

5.6.2 Summary of points raised by the literature

1. How big is big enough for a New Town? *(See lessons 6.1, 6.3)*

- A population of 32,000 as intuitively advocated by Howard (1902) is also argued to be a reasonable base-line figure for new settlements, particularly with respect to transport sustainability. Size is related to location, and more remote sites require a larger size for any degree of self-containment; sites closer to existing large cities can be smaller to provide day-to-day needs, (Miller, 1997).

- Neighbourhoods in the NTs in the 1950s were of a size to support at least one primary school, located at the centre, with its open spaces to give a green core. This neighbourhood principle underpinned policy on size: commonly based on provision of a catchment to support a primary school, as part of a larger district with a secondary school, and larger neighbourhoods of 15,000, (Miller, 1997).

- The largest of the New Towns was Milton Keynes with a target population of 250,000, consciously based on an attempt to up-date Ebenezer Howard's 'social city' cluster by a modern 'dispersed metropolis'. Even this level of development has not guaranteed 'self-sufficiency', particularly with respect to employment where employees commute out as well as into Milton Keynes.

- Towns with a target population of 150,000 to 300,000 appear to offer 'adequate' choice to employers and employees, and a full range of social, cultural, educational, health and other facilities, (Cervero, 1995).

- Neighbourhoods require a certain density as well as population size to ensure that the services needed to make them at least semi-autonomous are to be sustained. 5,000-10,000 people are required to support a group of local shops, (Madaani-pour, 2001).

- New Towns with larger populations are thought to make viable a wider range of commercial and service activities, would offer a wider range of jobs, and would be attractive to inward investment, (Cervero, 1995).

- The literature suggests that only at the regional scale of planning *(and in today's terms possibly sub-regional scale – external advisors view)* can a meaningful balance be sought between the need for urban development, and economic activity, the enhancement of the environment and conservation of natural resources and the cultivation of bio-diversity, (Lock, 1997).

- Connected with the question of size is the issue of location: town expansions worked better than NTs in that there was already a mature population to balance influx of predominantly young couple households, (Hall, D 1997).

- Whilst not directly a question of size, indirectly the issue of self-containment has implications for the optimum size of a New Town. Research has found that high levels of self-containment can be achieved for planned towns, but that this also depends on location and the degree of isolation of the town. Overall, it appears, job-housing balance and rates for internal-commuting are highest for Britain's most remote, car-dominated communities, (Cervero, 1995).

- On spatial organisation, the research suggests that employment and homes should be mixed, and that evidence from some UK NTs as well as international examples indicate this is both possible and can result in greater self-containment, (Bull, 1967).

2. What was the role of landscaping, public spaces and liveability in the success or otherwise of New Towns? *(See lessons 6.1, 6.4, 6.5, 6.6, 6.20, 6.22)*

- The spread-out development, often with gaps left for later infilling, brought accusations of 'prairie planning', and complaints from residents over extended journey times to work. This 'prairie planning' style was heavily criticised for its lack of urbanism, and subsequently compactness and higher density have been seen by some as preferable to low density, dispersed forms of layout. However, it appears that high density, low-rise schemes whilst acclaimed by architects were disliked by tenants and are now seen as 'problem' estates, (Miller, 1997; Cullen, 1953).

- Much New Town housing appeared dull, and critics berated the lack of urbanity in its architecture, whilst sociologists discovered 'New Town blues', (Miller, 1997; Canning, 1997).

- Many town centres were poorly designed and 'impersonal', compounded in some cases by the separation of pedestrians from other traffic. Often badly lit environments, with single retail use created unused and unsafe environments, (House of Commons, 2002).

- Wildlife corridors provide a range of environmental and social benefits if properly incorporated into new development. The best corridors have a number of characteristics:
  - predominantly semi-natural habitats
  - maximum diversity of habitats and age structure
  - continuity
  - substantial width
  - contains reservoirs of species linked to act as pathways for colonisation and recolonisation.
  (Wheeler, 1996)

- Extensive green spaces have sometimes created unsafe environments: footpaths between widely dispersed housing estates are perceived to be unsafe by residents. The use of extensive planting has in turn created unforeseen expenditure in both maintenance and landscape modification to overcome safety problems.

- The House of Commons 2002 report recommends an alternative strategy for design of new centres to include high quality public spaces, and a mix of uses on traditional high streets, including evening leisure activity. The report recognises the value of using woodland as a microclimatic shelter in exposed areas, and for providing aesthetic continuity in the form of tree belts, (House of Commons, 2002; Scott, 1991).

- Research suggests that landscape development should precede all other development so as to achieve environmental improvements in advance of new residential and employment areas – three to six years ahead is ideal, (Champion, 2001).

- Research strongly suggests that a policy of rampant species planting to quickly establish vandal and pollution resistant environments before replacing with more adventurous landscapes worked in Runcorn, (Usherwood, 1991).

- The use of native species reduces the risk of disease and increases the chance for new woodland to become self-sustaining, (Campion, 1991).

- Planting and management strategies need to be developed together, (Scott, 1991, Porter, 1998).

3. What are the long-term maintenance issues? *(See lesson 6.7)*

- The best NT schemes are those in which design and management collaborate on a day-to-day basis. (Moffat, 1991)

- In terms of housing, the reliance on experimentation in materials which have not stood the test of time means that much is in need of large scale replacement, (Miller, 1997).

- A combination of innovation in design, the use of materials that have not proved durable, and a departure from traditional forms of layout has meant that many of the NT's housing is failing, (Mackay, 1997).

4. What was the role of master-planning? Did it work? Did it change over time e.g. with the transfer from UDCs to LA control? (See lessons 6.3, 6.7)

- The principal requirement for the master-planning approach to work is that the end state in size and layout needs to be known at the outset of the design process, (Mackay, 1997).

- In most cases, the design procedure had to involve testing different scenarios based on clear planning objectives. Such testing requires high calibre and multi-disciplinary teams at the design stage. This multidiscipinarity is seen by some to have produced much higher quality designs than would otherwise have been the case, (Mackay, 1997).

- High degrees of land use zoning or separation tend towards a less successful town, socially and economically, and has implications for creating sustainable communities, (Bull, 1967).

- Some research notes the importance of involving both potential residents and those with experience of housing management in the design process to avoid the risks demonstrated, for example, by Stirling's scheme for Runcorn, (Morton, 1994).

- Research indicates that residents' co-operatives can have a vital role, particularly in residential redevelopment projects, beyond input simply into design, (Morton, 1994).

- Work on the redevelopment of Southgate in Runcorn highlights the importance of resident empowerment through keeping users involved and informed at every stage: although this is difficult in the case of new build development where there may be no existing residential community, (Morton, 1994).

5. To what extent have the distinctive design and layout patterns of the New Towns been key issues for their success? What aspects have been less successful? (See lessons 6.12, 6.16, 6.17, 6.19)

- Road design and Radburn layouts in later NTs were, in part, a response to greater car ownership. This approach needs to be carefully reviewed in light of radically changing conditions *(for example car ownership at levels at or beyond road capacity, unanticipated when most NTs were being planned – researcher's note)* particularly with respect to both environmental sustainability and liveability. Indeed, extensive use of Radburn layouts, separating cars from pedestrians, has resulted in areas that are poorly surveilled, especially with car parking at the rear (House of Commons, 2002).

- Miller, (1997), uses the term 'mega-grid' to define the scale of gridded layout in Milton Keynes. He sees it as 'over-rational', by which he appears to mean that the grid employed in MK was based on a particular perception or belief about the effeciency of this element with respect to servicing and transport, as well as to the scale of landscaping provision required. The implication is that such a rational approach, taken to an extreme, can create designs that work only with respect to the particular quality or demand for which they are created.

- The Essex Design Guide revealed the need to consider highway standards and built form together (See below on transport and design), (Miller, 1997).

- Urban form can be significantly influenced by transport provision: transport planning can create constraints and lead development in a particular direction. The New Towns that were not town expansions had a free hand to innovate transport solutions. This innovation was not, however, always positive in its outcomes. *(MK has been criticised, for example, as creating an over reliance on the private car, and difficulties in ensuring viable public transport throughout the network – researcher's note)* (Mackay, 1997).

- Mixed land use (of homes, employment, retail and leisure – researcher's note) at the local level helps obviate a key problem of dispersed and separate land-use provision: work journey 'tidal flows', (Mackay, 1997).

- Industrialised building systems and prefabrication were tried out in several New Towns, but most proved to be defective and have needed extensive refurbishment, (Miller, 1997). 'Neo-vernacular' design – i.e. design that attempted to borrow from local building styles and forms such as that described in the Essex Design Guide – became a dominant style, replacing the modernist approach in response to growing interest in local distinctiveness, (Miller, 1997).

- Stylistically in later NTs there was a return to a more 'friendly' style in housing design with a more generalised traditional character *(forms of layout associated with the Garden City Movement in particular, with front and back gardens, and two storey semi or detached properties as opposed to free standing point blocks – researcher's note)* (Miller, 1997)

- The cost of refurbishment to original design standards became prohibitive over time. Likewise, right to buy meant greater personalisation, to, in some commentators' views, the detriment of coherence of the original design concept in some NTs. This, it has been argued, was compounded by the weakness of design covenants, (Miller, 1997)

- Subsidies for housing in early schemes allowed statutory standards to be exceeded. This will be a serious issue where the volume house-builders are providing housing for a mass market, at prices which meet costs (Miller, 1997).

- The Redway network *(i.e. the system of routes for pedestrians and cyclists which run separately to the main road carriageways – researcher's note)* in Milton Keynes has suppressed cycle use, lowering the public's expectations of cycling as a mode of transport. They have given a limited freedom to young people, but at the cost of developing good cycling skills and confidence. The Redways have proven consistently less safe than grid-roads for adult cyclists. Separating cyclists from other road users does not appear to improve their safety, (Franklin, 1999; see also Madaani-pour, 2001; Ketteridge and Perkins, 1993)

6. How environmentally sustainable and bio diverse are the New Towns?
(See lesson 6.21)

- The master plans drawn up for the NTs had low-density development with large amounts of open space, and segregation of land uses. The low density in particular makes them unsustainable environmentally (Mackay, 1997; Bull, 1995). *(This is a contentious issue and some commentators such as Peter Hall have argued for suburban type densities – 30 – 40 dwellings per hectare – as achieving an optimum in terms of environmental and social sustainability. More research is needed – researcher's note)*

7 Has the design of New Towns influenced transport patterns? In what ways? e.g. dependence on cars versus public transport **(See lessons 6.14, 6.15, 6.16, 6.17, 6.18)**

- The experience of the New Towns is crucially relevant for providing politically acceptable ways to contain motorised travel demand. (Potter, 1997)

- Optimal use of public transport requires a concentration of travel generators (i.e. *housing and other high density land uses such as employment and retail centres – researcher's note*) within easy reach of the transport node to maximise the number of adjacent people and activities and thus induce high usage, (Mackay, 1997).

- Arrangements which offer the quickest travel times and the least cost to travellers are also the cheapest in terms of capital costs. The corridor or linear grid were better than the cartwheel or ring and radial arrangements in terms of these benefits. Corridor development with 'finger plans' also allow incorporation of rapid transit modes, (Mackay, 1997).

- Population density is an important factor in reducing car use. In reality a reduction of about a third in motorised journeys can be achieved by shifting from low density dispersed layouts to only medium densities, (Potter,[5] 1997).

- The operational needs of public transport and pedestrian access should be the basis for determining the urban design of a town with car travel accommodated in this structure, as in the cases of Runcorn, and Redditch. On the other hand, car oriented design requires public transport, bikes and walking to accommodate themselves to its needs – Milton Keynes, Washington, Telford, often with poor rates of success. Because of this, Milton Keynes' layout makes public transport without heavy subsidy impossible. Moreover, low density of development in Milton Keynes means that catchment areas for local facilities are small and cannot sustain wide variety of uses/social infrastructure. It has also been noted that Milton Keynes does not have capacity on its roads to meet car use demand, and may soon be grid-locked, (Potter, 1997).

- The literature draws a number of direct lessons from Runcorn/Peterborough/Redditch:
  - size of residential areas should be determined by the population necessary to maintain a frequent public transport system;
  - residential densities should be increased towards public transport routes;
  - low density land uses should be kept towards the edge of catchment areas;
  - the arrangement of different uses which are major travel generators should provide 'corridors' for public transport services.
  (Potter, 1997) **(See lessons 6.14, 6.15, 6.24, 6.25, 6.27)**

- Urban structures that are conducive to a good quality public transport service tends to enhance pedestrian and cycle access as well, (Potter, 1997).

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5   The work of Potter drawn on here represents a particular view of transport as it relates to design. Counter claims exist, but the research was not able to identify evidence based studies that set these out in the same degree of detail as Potter's position).

- In combination with other measures, long term structural policies such as land use planning might contribute significantly to the 'dream solution' to transport's environmental crisis – urban design is key to this. Low density has meant in many of the NTs that residents have to travel further for work, shopping etc than in traditional towns. Milton Keynes, in particular, is designed in a way that makes the provision of an adequate bus service prohibitively expensive (Potter, 1997). (*The counter argument might be that less congested road network, such as MK, produces fewer environmental costs and is more fuel efficient – researcher's note*).

- Experience in Runcorn shows that integrated paths, and roads are safer than segregated routes (Franklin, 1999).

8. How have the available strategic transport links between New Towns and other centres influenced their economic development and levels of sustainability?

- (See above on size, and section on transport) The main research finding appears to be that existing links – particularly public transport – have a profound affect on economic development. However, further research would be required to demonstrate and quantify this link, (Potter, 1997; Miller, 1997; Mackay, 1997).

9. Has the original design and/or layout frustrated later development?

- Early New Towns were inflexible in terms of their design and implementation, whereas the lesson from later NTs is that a degree of flexibility is important for successful planning, (Bull, 1967).

10. What was the intended role of green space? How was/is it managed?

- Green space was considered by some as a signal success in the case of Milton Keynes in creating a distinctive visual scene, but by others, this was at too high a price in terms of density, (Scott, 1991).

- The research identifies the need for good landscape practice demonstrated in the NTs experiment to be systematically researched and written up for both landscape architects and for landscape managers, (Moffat, 1991).

- Some of the most successful landscape schemes at the NT scale include the urban forestry approach. These, as in Telford, are treated as an integral element of the structure of the town. It is a component in community building through local involvement in its management, and can be economically profitable. Research suggests that this style of landscape has social, health, economic and community benefits, (Simson, 2000).

- In Warrington a strategy of informing local people through newsletters, leaflets etc of the assets of the landscape, planting, woodlands etc ensured that users had a greater respect for their environment than they might otherwise have had, (Scott,1991, see also Wheeler 1996; Higson 1987).

11. To what degree was local and sub-regional identity and distinctiveness considered in the New Towns programme?

- Primarily local and regional distinctiveness were not considered in the first New Towns, where a modernist planning and architectural design ethos majoring on the international was favoured *(after CIAM, the European heroic designers such as Le Corbusier, and possibly caricatured as high rise, flat roofed, system built and undecorated architecture – researcher's note)*. However, experiments such as the Essex Design Guide produced more regionally and locally appropriate styles, particularly in housing detail, and layout of streets. The downside was that the Essex Design Guide tended to spawn imitations in places far removed from the watering holes of Essex Man, (Miller, 1997). **(See lesson 6.22)**

- In his review of the New Towns experience, Lock (1998) argues that there is a need to recognise the importance of the region when considering design factors for new developments, and that design should incorporate local 'character, colour and tone'.

12. What role did public art play in place making, and how was it managed?

- The NTs provided a unique opportunity for public art — finding artists and art works and incorporating artists into main stream development in some cases.

- There were two approaches: first, importing art works, and second, using the town as a setting and context architecturally and socially for art works by resident artists working in-situ. Glenrothes had both housing studios for artists to live and a 'writer's house' 'Town artist' as a contributing member of the planning team working on a full-time basis.

- Arts initiatives were often used to employ younger artists and members of the local community in projects, thus building links across and within communities.

- When relegated from main stream planning to leisure departments, their ability to contribute as artists was diminished. **(See lesson 6.28)**

- As NT Development Corporations were wound down those LAs taking on the responsibility did not choose to continue artists' contracts.

- The literature suggests that there cannot be any doubt that the New Towns have played a major role in the development of public art practices in the United Kingdom, (Harding, 1997; see also Kronfol, 1987)

5.6.4 Key lessons from the literature on physical design and master-planning

It should be noted that the manner in which the New Towns were designed, as well as many of the design philosophies incorporated in them, were a product of their time. None-the-less certain lessons about form and layout, as well as about the mixing of uses and principles of size can be drawn. Their transferability to the Growth Areas will depend largely on the type delivery mechanism and the design philosophy used.

Table 5.6: Lessons on physical environment and design/masterplanning	
Lessons:	**Comment**
Size:	
6.1 The literature does not precisely define an optimum size. However, it does suggest that as a rule of thumb, development should be thought of in terms of scales of provision for different sizes of population/areas of growth. The primary school (or nursery?) and its catchment has been a fairly robust benchmark for the neighbourhood scale – implying a population of say 3,000. The addition of neighbourhoods to make up secondary school districts of say 15,000 may provide a workable – and walkable – spatial result.[6]	**Key lesson requiring awareness**
6.2 Appropriate size is also related to location of public transport infrastructure and its provision: a linear form of development with periodic clusters of settlements can sustain a wide range of sizes of settlement.	**Key lesson requiring awareness**
6.3 The size of a New Town with respect to economic, infrastructural, and increasingly environmental self-sufficiency, sustainability and identity is a more complex issue. Milton Keynes at 250,000 might be an ideal in terms of all these things – but even Milton Keynes has both *out* and *in* migration of workers. Size, in this respect, is also closely dependent on access to other centres and towns. The expanded towns provide a salient lesson here, in that they were more successful economically and socially in many respects because they did not have to bear the burden of a completely new social and economic infrastructure.	**Key lesson requiring awareness**
Landscaping, public space and liveability:	
6.4 There appears to be a consensus in the literature with regard to some design issues connected with landscape, space and liveability interpreted fairly broadly. In essence, denser development, with all facilities within walking distance of residential neighbourhoods may provide the best conditions in terms of liveability as it is currently understood. This links to the provision and layout of both routes and landscaping.	**Key lesson requiring awareness – to be avoided**
6.5 Working with the existing cultural and topographical landscape creates places that can generate a sense of personal affiliation. The 'new-town blues' were partly a product of both low density (and hence compromised access), and anonymous or placeless aesthetics (as well as issues of community). It should, however, be acknowledged that psychological responses to places are not dependent merely on the physical setting, but are also the product of social, community and economic factors and conditions.	**Key lesson requiring action**
6.6 The use of buildings, layout and public art to create more legible environments is also closely tied into the issue of liveability. The New Towns provide a positive lesson in some cases here: for example using the layout of the human scale and a well connected grid of mixed-use and streets with a mix of travel modes (walking, cycles, public transport and cars) to encourage walking, and to create a clear sense of place, remain basic principles of good urban design.	**Key lesson requiring action**
Long term maintenance:	
6.7 With respect to both housing design and layout, traditional building technologies and traditional forms of layout seem to generate lower maintenance costs.	**Key lesson requiring action**
6.8 With respect to landscape, the research indicates that large expanses of heavily planted land can require greater maintenance than either the green corridor approach, or restricting planting to private space. This depends to a degree on the quality of planting, and there may be economies of scale in areas of large scale planting.	**Key lesson requiring action**
Masterplanning:	
6.9 The literature does not comment very fully on the use or effectiveness of master-planning as a design or delivery mechanism. However, certain lessons can be derived and transferred with regard to particular dimensions of the master-planning experience.	**Secondary lesson requiring awareness**

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6   The work of Peter Hall (1999) can be sited here.

	Lessons:	Comment
6.10	The virtue of master-planning as a process, where major projects need to be thought through at every level from the outset, is that it requires a multi-disciplinary approach where common agreement is established between the different professionals involved in the plan making. This does not have to be abandoned where the master-plan is not the main product. In other words, the literature which deals with more recent thinking about large scale development suggests that the coding and frame working approach can be both more sensitive to changing needs (particularly important when a project can take several decades to come to completion), and when the end state in terms of both form and size is unpredictable.	**Key lesson requiring action**
	Design and layout and its link to creating successful places:	
6.11	Whilst this is a massive topic in which design thinking is currently evolving in the direction of solutions advocated by *Responsive Environments* (Bentley et al, 1984), and its successors such as *By Design* (2000), lessons from the New Towns are rather obvious with respect to this theme.	**Key lesson requiring awareness**
6.12	Highway standards and built form should be treated in a holistic way – they need to be considered together if liveable streets are to be the end result.	**Key lesson requiring awareness**
6.13	Although design innovation is not always desirable, it is more possible when development is not constrained by existing layout patterns.	**Secondary lesson requiring awareness**
6.14	It is essential to fully consider public transport implications of road layouts at the outset of the design process: roads are the most difficult component of built form to re-design once they have been laid down.	**Key lesson requiring awareness**
6.15	Layouts which concentrate development on high density 'finger' routes, or around nodes or major junctions are more supportive of public transport: the more people living within a five minute walking distance of a public transport stop the more economically sustainable public transport becomes, and the lower the public subsidy that might be required.	**Key lesson requiring action**
6.16	Mixed use development at the local or district level (i.e. within a 400 meter radius) mitigates problems associated with dispersed and separate land-use provision: particularly work journey 'tidal flows'.	**Key lesson requiring action**
6.17	Housing design at above minimum standards (possibly with respect to environmental sustainability) may require public subsidy.	**Key lesson requiring action**
6.18	Try and ensure all public streets are addressed by active fronts – houses with front doors addressing them, and other uses overlooking public space.	**Key lesson requiring awareness**
6.19	Particularly avoid Radburn type layouts, and the separation of different transport modes (all routes should cater for all users).	**Key lesson requiring awareness**
	The role of green space:	
6.20	Whilst more research is needed on the actual role and management dimension of green space, the main lesson appears to be that if provided for solely decorative and aesthetic ends or according to a modernist formula, re the ratio of built form to open space, it is not successful. On the other hand, current critiques would suggest that purposeful green space that has clear ownership contributes significantly to a neighbourhood's liveability.	**Key lesson requiring awareness**

	Lessons:	Comment
	Environmental sustainability and bio-diversity:	
6.21	The main lessons re environmental sustainability are dealt with under the transport section below. However, the research indicates that very low density development interspersed with large, mono species (i.e. grassed) areas does not contribute to bio-diversity, or social sustainability. Compactness combined with green corridors/ an urban forestry approach, creates more sustainable environments. However, this lesson requires further evidenced based elaboration to ensure that correct standards and densities can be specified that will deliver sustainable objectives.[7]	**Key lesson requiring action**
	Local identity:	
6.22	The experience of the Essex Design Guide[8] suggests that local identity is important in creating a sense of place, but that it needs to be thoroughly researched in terms of the existing identity of a locale or region, and applied with discretion.	**Secondary lesson that requires awareness**
6.23	Townscape analysis of the laterMark II New Towns in particular indicate that scale and density are key factors creating aesthetically positive environments: dispersed layouts lacking in variety in building height/street patterns tend to be experienced negatively by users. Traditional forms of town, with a mixture of building types and heights, compactly arranged, deliver a better sense of place. Key lesson requiring awareness	**Key lesson requiring awareness**
	Transport and its links with design:	
6.24	The operational needs of public transport and pedestrian access should determine the urban design of a town with car travel accommodated in this structure.	**Key lesson requiring action**
6.25	Lessons from Runcorn/Peterborough/Redditch • Size of residential areas is determined by population necessary to maintain a frequent public transport system • Residential densities increase towards public transport routes • Low density land uses are kept towards edge of catchment areas • Arrangement of different uses which are major travel generators provide 'corridors' for public transport services	**Key lesson requiring action**
6.26	Urban structures that are conducive to a good quality public transport service enhance pedestrian and cycle access as well.	**Key lesson requiring awareness**
	Public art:	
6.27	Public art could have a major role in creating memorable and legible environments, and thus enhancing community ownership of and individual affiliation to place.	**Secondary lesson requiring awareness**
6.28	If it is to be treated seriously and make maximum contribution to design, the role of the artist needs to be central to the design process and not marginal: the artist should be an integral part of the design team, not someone who provides objects to decorate space already designed by someone else.	**Secondary lesson requiring awareness**

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7   The environmental issues are discussed under transport largely because it is primarily the transport literature which has much to say about this topic from the point of view of evidence.

8   The Essex Design Guide was published by Essex County Council in the 1970s as a design manual for the Local Authority, to be consulted by developers, aimed at providing clear guidance on locally appropriate layout and building types in Essex. This innovation has led to the adoption of an approach to design with local identity in mind, in a number of Local Authorities which have produced their own design guides. The best example of this is probably the Stratford-upon-Avon Design Guide used as supplementary planning guidance particularly for larger scale new development.

Additional note:

In *Sociable Cities, the legacy of Ebenezer Howard*, Hall and Ward (1998) pull out what they call 12 key strategic policy elements (pp151-152). The full text should be read, but they can be summarised as:

1. Develop urban nodes: ie urban development should be clustered around transport nodes, not evenly spread across a landscape.
2. Selective urban densification: ie density can be varied across a development, and higher densities should be concentrated at nodes.
3. Avoid town cramming – ie good urban design is important, a component of which is quality open space.
4. Strategic provision for greenfield development.
5. Distance: developments should be sited sufficiently far from existing large scale settlements to guarantee, as far as possible, self-containment.
6. Top-quality transport linkages: important to incorporate transport links to existing urban centres in large-scale new development.
7. Clustered development: research strongly suggests a linear version of Howard's Social City[9] with small walking-scale communities (population 20-30,000) clustered along public transport routes.
8. Town expansions and New Towns: along transport corridors, development should contain a mixture of different kinds of development.
9. Density pyramids: higher densities, with shopping should be located close to public transport hubs.
10. Variation according to geography: all principles above should be flexible and take account of local natural conditions, and respect local attributes.
11. Areas of tranquillity: these should be identified, and development/growth restricted where it would have negative impacts on tranquil zones.
12. Stimulate remote rural areas: rural decentralisation should be encouraged outside zones of outward pressure from the cities and conurbations.

5.7 Theme seven: End user experience

5.7.1 Introduction

This section provides findings from the literature on issues related to End User Experience (in particular residents, but also those not resident but employed in the NTs, and visitors). Findings relating to this theme should be based on research that focuses on the communities which live and work in New Towns, to access their views and opinions on different aspects of the New Towns' experience. However, within the literature reviewed, we have found relatively few studies that are based on this kind of empirical research. Having reviewed findings from the literature search, we identify lessons, and then make recommendations at the end of this section for further research that could fill some of the gaps.

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9 This is a reference to Ebenezer Howard's late 19th Century notion of a social city, based on an ideal size of population in which town and country are brought together, and development is concentrated on a radial system of routes from the centre of a settlement outward.

The questions raised in the brief relating to End User Experience were the following:

1. *What has the experience of living and working in the New Towns been, and are there lessons to be drawn about the relationship between, say, the form of the New Towns, their infrastructural and layout characteristics, the balance between private and public sector housing etc and users' levels of satisfaction?*
2. *To what degree have users formed attachment to and affiliation with the New Towns and what accounts for this?*
3. *To what degree do users feel alienated by their environment in the New Towns and what accounts for this?*

Each of these questions is addressed in turn below from a reading of the literature. This provides the basis for then inferring possible transferable lessons with regard to the Growth Areas Programme. However, given the limited scope of the evidence-based research on this theme, the transferable lessons are necessarily limited.

1. *What has the experience of living and working in the New Towns been, and are there lessons to be drawn about the relationship between, say, the form of the New Towns, their infrastructural and layout characteristics, the balance between private and public sector housing etc and user's levels of satisfaction?*

- The literature reviewed on this topic shows mixed evidence. This is partly due to the different periods in which the research was carried out, and partly a function of which New Towns were the subject of the research. It is clear however, that this topic would benefit from further investigation, to understand the views of those living and working in New Towns.

- Early studies into the attitudes of new arrivals to the New Towns reveal the sense of relief that many families felt, moving out of often sub-standard housing, into the relative green and spacious surroundings of the New Town. For example, in 1973, the Milton Keynes Development Corporation undertook a survey of around 1,500 residents who had recently moved to the town, highlighting the primacy of improved housing as a factor in moving (Milton Keynes DC, 1974, the so-called *Four Years On* study). A similar study was also carried out in 1976, the *Seven Years On* study (Milton Keynes DC, 1977), which showed that just over 70% of respondents were either "very pleased" or "quite pleased" with life in Milton Keynes. The satisfaction felt by new arrivals to the New Towns was also underlined in the survey by Deakin (1977) looking at the dispersal of disadvantaged groups from London. **(See lesson 7.1)**

- However, the improved housing conditions that many people experienced did not make up for the inadequate provision, in the early stages of some New Towns, of social infrastructure: local shops and entertainment, and poor public transport (although these problems are not confined to the New Towns context). For example, in the *Seven Years On* survey of 2,471 residents (Milton Keynes DC, 1977), by far the most frequently mentioned problem in Milton Keynes was the lack of a hospital (cited by 33% of respondents). A community hospital opened in Milton Keynes in 1979, and a District General Hospital opened in 1983, but many residents felt that these facilities should have been provided earlier. In the 1950s and '60s, the phrase "New Town Blues" (Cullen, 1953) was used to describe the feelings of people who had recently moved into New Towns, where large new settlements had been built rapidly, and lacked a sense of history, community, and tradition. However, from the literature reviewed, there appears to be mixed evidence as to whether this phenomenon was unique to the New Towns, or whether it was a more widespread occurrence in many different communities in different towns and cities. Certainly there were challenges in 'creating communities' through urban dispersal programmes, and these were addressed by the social development officers. But the existence of 'New Town Blues' appears to have been short-lived, if it existed at all. A more lasting criticism of the New Towns from the end user's perspective comes from reactions against the built environment and the experimental forms of architecture used in many New Towns.

- Modern terraced housing on grid squares in Milton Keynes has received a mixed press. Although architectural commentators praised the experimentalism of the 1970s rental housing developments, Clapson (1988) suggests that the housing in Milton Keynes was not popular with inhabitants in the mid 1970s and '80s. By the mid-1980s, Milton Keynes was suffering from an image problem created partly by the early housing styles. **(See lesson 7.2)**

- In the 1980s, with a shift in government policies to give developers a freer rein, most building companies opted for a more traditional suburban housing style, more popular with residents, who subsequently 'voted with their feet'. "The grid squares with badly-designed terraces experienced an exodus of those who could afford to move to the better-designed areas" (Peter Waterman, a social development manager at Milton Keynes DC since 1972, quoted in Clapson et al (1988)). **(See lesson 7.3)**

- There is also evidence from other New Towns that the modernist architecture and design features were not popular with residents, and have led in some cases to the demolition of the least successful estates, such as the Southgate Estate in Runcorn, which failed to meet the needs of residents, (Morton, 1994). **(See lesson 7.3)**

- However, there is also evidence to suggest that Milton Keynes is now popular with residents, recognised for its low densities and suburban ethos which many residents appreciate (Clapson, 2002, 2004). In particular, residents like the separation of residential grid squares from each other and, most significantly, from the economic life of the New Town. A study of citizens' perceptions of the town, undertaken for the Development Corporation during the mid 1980s by Bristol University's School of Advanced Urban Studies (Bishop, 1986), found such comments as "having spaces between estates doesn't cut you off", were common: "I like it. I think Milton Keynes is getting better but don't want to see things disappear, like green spaces and separation between the estates". This research also found that a large majority of people were enthusiastic about the "countryside qualities" of openness, space and cleanliness. Many were fearful that the low densities and the green and open aspects of many areas of Milton Keynes would be "lost by overcrowding" and by "filling-in" . **(See lesson 7.3)**

- However, more recent evidence presented to the House of Commons Committee on Transport, Local Government and the Regions (2002) suggests that New Town centres in particular are not highly-thought of, by users. "The New Towns town centres are often very unattractive and, as a result, they are losing shoppers to nearby centres". However, it is worth noting that this statement is not backed up by research into end users' views, but is rather the "received view" of commentators reporting to the committee. It would be possible to investigate this view further through interviews with end-users, and backed up by evidence in Local Plans of current retail development requirements and 'leakage' of expenditure to other shopping centres.

- The House of Commons report also notes that the Radburn design for housing layout (See section on urban design), with garages at the rear and the front of houses only accessible by footpaths increases the feeling of insecurity in residents. Housing estates are often surrounded by roads and green space, which give residents a sense of isolation. Again these statements are not backed up in the report by evidence-based research. Such an area would be a useful topic for further investigation.

- A recently funded ESRC research project into children and urban space (O'Brien et al, 1999) highlighted particular concerns about New Town design from a child's perspective. The research found that children in the New Town of Hatfield were concerned about street lighting in the town. In particular, researchers found that poorly-lit underpasses, designed to help children cross the roads more safely, were in fact very frightening to them. However, when compared to their counterparts in inner and outer London, the freedom that New Town children had to move around their neighbourhood was much greater in Hatfield than in London. It was found that in the New Town, children's freedom to move around their neighbourhood is facilitated by its physical features, plentiful green spaces situated close to children's homes, the relative smallness of the area and its lower population density. The continuity of the original garden city design intention, combining "the best of town and country", was striking in New Town children's imagery of their local neighbourhood. **(See lesson 7.3)**

- A number of studies into community satisfaction in the New Town of Hemel Hempstead have also been undertaken (Bardo, 1977; Bardo and Bardo, 1982). These reveal the complexity of the concept of community satisfaction, embracing a multitude of factors including physical, environmental as well as social and social-psychological issues. Factors that were significant in contributing to community satisfaction in Hemel Hempstead related, among other things, to 'homeliness', 'belonging', and the quality of the built environment.

- More recent surveys in Milton Keynes have also shown that while in general satisfaction with the town is high, there are a number of aspects which could be improved. For example, the 1988 Milton Keynes Household Survey (Milton Keynes DC, 1988) revealed that 81% of the 4,291 respondents were either satisfied or very satisfied with their housing. However, more than half of the respondents (54%) were not satisfied with the availability of low cost housing. A follow-up survey of 1,045 residents in 1990 (Milton Keynes BC, 1990), revealed the likes and dislikes of respondents. Among the factors that residents liked, were good shops (cited by 33% of respondents), good social events and entertainment (28%) and the greenery and open space in the town (27%). Among factors that respondents disliked, were poor public transport (15%) and crime and vandalism (11%).

- This overall rather mixed and patchy evidence suggests that further research could be usefully undertaken in this area, particularly looking at New Towns compared to other towns.

2. To what degree have users formed attachment to and affiliation with the New Towns and what accounts for this?

- Above and beyond the research highlighted in the section above, there is little further evidence to respond to the question about attachment to, and affiliation with, the New Towns. This is certainly an area that would benefit from further research.

3. To what degree do users feel alienated by their environment in the New Towns and what accounts for this?

- Similarly, although some of the research illustrated above does address the issue of alienation, there are complex messages about the New Towns environment that come from (some rather dated) research, as well as from anecdotal evidence. Further evidence-based research is essential to understand more fully the links between the design features of the New Towns environment and users' (both residents' and workers') feelings of alienation from, or indeed harmony with, the environment.

5.7.3 Key lessons from the literature on end user experience

Table 5.7: Lessons on end user experience		
	Lessons:	**Comment**
7.1	End user experience (particularly residents) of New Towns changed over time and space. Initial experiences in the first few years were significantly different to those 20 years later. Similarly, experiences depend on local circumstances, and the particular contexts in which the communities are being created: reactions of residents in Milton Keynes were very different to those in Runcorn.	**Key lesson requiring awareness**
7.2	It is important to consult end users, before, during and after new settlements are created, and to critically evaluate what works and what is less successful. Flexibility is important, to react to end users' responses.	**Key lesson requiring action**
7.3	Evidence from the New Towns is mixed, but some lessons to emerge from the literature relating to end users' experience include the following: • Green spaces are very important from a user's perspective • Good street lighting is important • Underground tunnels are not popular • Alleyways and passage-ways are not popular, due to the fear of crime • Social infrastructure/public facilities should be in place before a community is housed.	**Key lesson requiring action**

5.8 Theme eight: Long-term sustainability

5.8.1 Introduction

This section provides findings from the literature on issues related to long-term sustainability. This can be considered as a cross-cutting theme, addressing issues that affect the other themes of the literature review, in particular the adaptability to change in the different policy areas. Each of the other themes has highlighted the evolution of New Towns policy and practice, as implementation progressed through the boom period of the 1950s and '60s, to the more austere economic climate of the 1970s. This theme looks at the New Towns' ability to be flexible in the face of evolving economic and policy conditions, and asks whether the problems faced by New Towns were in fact similar to those of other towns in similar contexts.

The questions raised in the brief relating to long-term sustainability were the following:

1. *How flexible and adaptable to change have the New Towns been in relation to the other research themes?*
2. *How do New Towns relate to the current sustainable communities criteria?*
3. *Are the problems of New Towns significantly different from those of other towns with similar regional and social locations?*

Each of these questions is addressed in turn below from a reading of the literature. This provides the basis for then inferring possible transferable lessons with regard to the theme of long-term sustainability for the Growth Areas Programme.

5.8.2 Summary of points raised in the literature

1. How flexible and adaptable to change have the New Towns been in relation to the other research themes?

Creating Communities

- New Towns have been faced with the challenge of creating communities through bringing together people from diverse locations and backgrounds. They proved themselves adaptable to change, by responding to the shifts in housing policy and provision that were introduced, particularly from the 1980s. This change in policy had a potentially significant impact on communities, by attracting owner occupiers rather than social housing tenants. There was adequate provision within the New Towns structure that allowed for changes to be absorbed into the mechanics of new development.

Governance

- The top-down management style which characterised the New Town Development Corporations and reduced the role of local government has cast a long shadow. Where the Commission for the New Towns inherited large development land assets with deemed planning permission from former development corporations (these subsequently being passed to English Partnerships), this has denied local planning authorities the normal flexibility in changing planning policies to reflect new agendas and negotiating planning agreements. Problems experienced with the 'balancing asset' policy have made it more difficult for some former New Town local authorities, especially in economically less favoured locations, to fund renewal of social housing and community assets.

Economic achievement and competitiveness

- Economic adaptability and flexibility of the NTs compared with other types of urban development, and traditional urban areas is difficult to assess. The obvious fact is that all urban areas and types of development experience the same economic pressures locally, regionally and nationally. Adaptability does not have a one-to-one relationship with form of development. If the NTs were more adaptable and responsive to changing economic circumstance, this may be attributable to their lower costs – in land and wages.

- It must also be noted that economic robustness – as a dimension of flexibility – is generally associated with larger conurbations than those represented by the NTs. They were not self-contained urban units, and have not shown the productivity gains from agglomeration economies.

- On the other hand, they have been successful in attracting jobs from overseas – perhaps through a combination of the quality of their aesthetic environment, the quality of their transport links (in some cases), and the low wages in some places (such as Telford).

Physical environment and design

- The main difficulty in responding to the need for change in design has been cost. There are instances of whole districts of some NTs that have been replaced wholesale as a consequence of poor design (although this is not a phenomenon unique to the NTs) – such as the James Stirling housing scheme in Runcorn. Other schemes have demonstrated a lack of durability, largely because of the use of untried materials and detailing. The House of Commons (2002) report on the state of the New Towns noted that many are facing a serious challenge in terms of physical regeneration.

- Landscapes and landscaping have been more durable, although cost has again been a significant factor in creating pressures for change and modification to original ideas – particularly with regard to management and maintenance.

- In terms of urban design, what was considered desirable even twenty years ago is no longer so in many ways. Radburn layouts, for example, are generally condemned, and designs which incorporate them have not stood the test of changing times and perceptions. The principle problem here is the separation of pedestrian paths from car routes, in many instances leading to inactive and unsurveilled paths at the rear of properties.

- Milton Keynes provides a further demonstration of the difficulties created by elements of poor design thinking, built on assumptions about wealth and access to private transport that have arguably proved to be unsupported by experience.

Delivery

- The practice of disposal of development land assets with planning permissions granted by former development corporations, with financial returns going to the Commission for the New Towns/English Partnerships (and thence to the Treasury) has handicapped local authorities in regenerating unsatisfactory social housing areas.

- The 'balancing assets' transferred to local authorities to cover deficits on New Town housing and community assets have sometimes proved not to be so. Attempts by local authorities to create new 'balancing assets' through redevelopment of housing or community assets (in line with newer ideas of mixed development) have, until recently, been subject to harsh recoupment rules which have limited their value in delivery of regeneration.

Finance

- The New Towns were implemented in a period of significant change in terms of economic climate, as well as in terms of attitude towards the private sector's role in development. The second wave of New Towns were implemented in a period of much higher interest rates, a situation that lead to severe financial difficulties, and the writing-off of significant debts. From this point of view, the New Towns model itself was not adaptable to change, as the regulations governing the 60-year loans could not be modified. However, the Government itself had the power to write off the debts, and in this respect, there was a certain degree of flexibility to adapt to change. Nevertheless, a less rigid financing regime drawn up at the beginning could have avoided the significant deficits that accrued in the second and third wave of New Towns.

- With the shift in attitude in the role of the private sector in development, New Towns showed themselves to be adaptable to change. Out of financial necessity they turned to the private sector to provide investment in infrastructure.

End user experience

- In many respects, from the perspective of the end users, the New Towns have been rather inflexible in their ability to adapt to change. In most cases, residents' experience of living and working in New Towns, and their perception of the built environment, were not canvassed on a systematic basis. When they were, and it was found that there were inadequacies in the 'system' of New Towns, it was relatively difficult to adjust. In part, this was because fundamental changes in the built environment would have required drastic change. In the case of Runcorn, one housing estate was eventually demolished, but this was after many years of residents' complaints. The fundamental nature of new settlements means that significant changes as a result of end users experiences are necessarily difficult to implement. (One clear lesson to come out of this, is to consult the population before building, to ensure that the outcome suits the needs and expectations of those who might live in the area; or alternatively, to survey a sample of the population whose characteristics reflect those of likely residents).

2. How do New Towns relate to the current sustainable communities criteria?

- Recent research through the Egan Review (2004) has identified seven key components of a sustainable community. Evidence from the literature suggests that New Towns represent examples of good practice in relation to some of these criteria.

- In particular, the physical layout of the New Towns was desirable at the time, and reflected best practice in urban design. However, the low densities are now seen as unhelpful in building sustainable communities, as defined at the beginning of the 21st century.

Sustainable Communities Criteria (Egan, 2004)	Evidence from the New Towns
Economy – A flourishing and diverse local economy	It is difficult to generalise. However, it is a fact that many of the NTs were often built around a single employment base (extractive and heavy industrial manufacturing in Glenrothes, Peterlee and Corby; the chemical industry in Runcorn). This has meant that they have been highly vulnerable to the changes in fortune of these industries, and have had to adapt to new markets and new employment conditions. i.e., with the exception of the larger NTs – Milton Keynes in particular – they do not measure up positively against this criteria.
Housing and the Built Environment – A quality built and natural environment	The sustainable communities criterion relating to this theme is imprecise. Given this, it is difficult to generalise about how well the NTs measure up. They fail with respect to density, generally, housing design – except some elements of Milton Keynes; and where they were built on unworkable assumptions about the promise of innovation in architecture and layout, they also fail to provide the structure and conditions for decent places for building and sustaining communities.
Environmental – Providing places for people to live in an environmentally-friendly way	See above; in addition Milton Keynes clearly works poorly with respect to this criterion – although it appears very 'green'. Its layout assumes access to the private car is higher than it probably is in reality; and makes questionable the provision of adequate and viable public transport. The other NTs vary to a degree that generalisation is extremely difficult here, and a case by case assessment would be necessary.

Sustainable Communities Criteria (Egan, 2004)	Evidence from the New Towns
Social and Cultural – Vibrant, harmonious and inclusive communities	There is mixed evidence from the New Towns literature, depending on time and place. "Vibrant, harmonious and inclusive communities" are not created overnight, as the New Towns experience shows, and many factors influenced the speed with which such communities were created, including the type of housing, the social infrastructure and the support provided by the Social/Community Development Officer. Parts of some NTs, over certain periods, score highly, but by no means all NTs, in all neighbourhoods, all the time.
Governance – Effective and inclusive participation, representation and leadership	The legacy arrangements in respect of the ownership and control of landed assets have sometimes distorted the long term ability of local authorities to exercise the freedom of action that would be available to their equivalents in 'normal' towns.
Transport and connectivity – Good transport services and communication linking people to jobs, schools, health and other sevices	Some worked well, others did not. Milton Keynes has already been commented on above. Runcorn, Redditch and Peterborough worked well: the underlying principle of clusters of development along main routes, with all 'day-to-day' services within walking distance of all homes has clear implications in terms of transport, connectivity and the link with layout.
Services – A full range of appropriate, accessible public, private, community and voluntary services	Initially the provision of services in the New Towns was patchy, but over time, the social infrastructure, provided by public, private and community bodies, has become a notable feature of life in the New Towns.

3. Are the problems of New Towns significantly different from those of other towns with similar regional and social locations?

- The literature highlights the problems that New Towns have faced over the years. From our review of the literature, the most significant of these are the following:
  - Pockets of high levels of deprivation.
  - Domination of car based transport in later New Towns.
  - Financial difficulties in later years.

The literature reviewed in this study does not address the specific question of whether there were similar problems in other towns, and it appears that there has been little concrete research carried out into these issues. However, from the authors' background knowledge of the history of UK cities in terms of urban design, sustainable communities and governance, the following remarks can be made:

- **Pockets of high level of deprivation:** To a greater or lesser degree, all the New Towns are characterised by pockets of high levels of deprivation. These include housing abandonment, anti-social behaviour, high crime levels and high unemployment. These are particularly acute in certain New Towns, for example, Runcorn and Skelmersdale and Corby.

These problems are replicated in other towns and cities across the UK, and were therefore not unique to the New Towns experience.

- **Problems generated by car based transport system:** There is little directly relevant, comparative research on this issue. However, it is fairly clear that the growth in the volume of private car ownership was not anticipated in the earlier NTs, although the generous scale of roads and provision of infrastructure meant that they could more easily accommodate this rise compared with traditional towns. On the other hand, Milton Keynes shows how the expectation of private car ownership could produce road layouts and an overall spatial structure that is actually unsustainable.

- **Financial difficulties in later years:** This problem was unique to New Towns, given the specific mechanisms that were established to finance them. There were no other cities in the UK that faced similar problems of financial deficits. Thus, this problem is not replicated in other cities.

5.8.3 Key lessons on long term sustainability

- Given that this is a cross cutting theme, the summary lessons for this section reiterate the lessons that have been drawn out under each theme. The reader is therefore advised to consult the individual themes to learn more precise lessons from this issue of sustainability.

Table 5.8: Lessons on long term sustainability		
	Lesson:	**Comment**
8.1	Consult the population on the design of their neighbourhood, and the facilities that they would find useful.	**Key lesson requiring awareness**

6. Gaps in the literature

One of the most striking aspects of this literature review has been the lack of a comprehensive evidence base through which to form conclusions and lessons. Under each theme, we have identified key gaps in the literature which would benefit from further research.

6.1 Delivery

- There appears to be no systematic research into public/private partnership arrangements and its comparative effectiveness or efficiency.

- Likewise, there is little detailed research into the growing involvement of the private volume housebuilders (or the private sector more generally) in delivering the development of the New Towns.

- There has been little thoroughgoing analysis of the economic cost of the New Town programme.

6.2 Finance

- "What worked best" in relation to attracting private finance would benefit from further research. If further information were available on emerging ideas for the financing of Growth Areas, this research could be targeted to answer specific questions that would be particularly pertinent to the evolving policy debate regarding the potential role of the private sector.

6.3 Creating communities

There are a number of issues around communities that aren't addressed in the New Towns literature, but which would benefit from further exploration, in the context of the Growth Areas, issues such as:

- Integration versus exclusion.
- Sub-communities in New Towns.
- Self-selecting mono-communities (is this desirable?).

The literature review has highlighted a number of gaps in the evidence base, which could be usefully filled, by investigating a number of issues further, including:

- What impact did the varying housing arrangements (tenure and provision) have on creating integrated communities?
- What keeps original in-migrants and their children in the New Towns? How have the communities changed over time?
- What aspects of the design of New Towns did residents like/dislike?

6.4 Governance

- Almost all research about the governance of the New Towns has been 'insider' research (undertaken by those who were themselves actors in the process), or at least research which has substantially shared the same outlook. This has cast the development corporations very firmly in the role of heroes. In this dominant New Town narrative other actors are, variously, cast in the roles of faithful members of the supporting cast, innocents to be awakened, curmudgeons or, occasionally, villains.

- Objectively, there is a tremendous amount to admire about the New Town development corporations. Yet this essentially one dimensional narrative means that all research findings have to be viewed with this in mind. Moreover it leaves many questions unanswered about how authority, power, responsibility, duty and representation were actually established and renegotiated in areas undergoing rapid change.

- While there may, quite reasonably, be doubts about commissioning further research on these historical aspects of the New Towns programme, the key point is to be mindful of these questions in a new programme of similar ambition.

6.5 Economic competitiveness and achievement

- In terms of systematic analyses of the economic achievement and competitiveness of the NTs, despite the large volume of opinion-based material on the subject, there is surprisingly little substantive empirical research. In reality we do not have much contemporary or post hoc analyses that stands up to critical scrutiny. In some cases there is almost no adequate research based analysis. Two of the questions raised in the brief have a particularly thin coverage. These relate to:
  - any analyses of viable business sector incentives to operate in the New Towns;
  - any analyses of the real effects of the vast amounts of promotional material and marketing effort that were produced by the NTDCs.

- Overall, few of the questions raised in the brief could be said to have a substantial body of respectable research literature devoted to them. Some of the best concerns the impacts of the NTs on development elsewhere particularly in the major conurbations. There are few examples among the remaining questions where the literature is as strong. This is indicated by the rather meagre list of acceptable literature that has been trawled from the extensive bibliographical databases searched for this project.

6.6 Physical design

- There has been little or no solid research about the process of master-planning, its comparative effectiveness as against other mechanisms such as design frameworks and coding.

- The intended role of green space and its contribution to liveability has likewise received little research attention, despite the plethora of articles in the landscape and other professional press regarding its positive influence in this respect.

- Urban design as a whole has not been researched, except at the level of road and infrastructure, and possibly landscape treatment. Urban design is a relatively new discipline, or at least its interest in design beyond townscape is relatively new.

- The role and impact of phasing of development in design terms, particularly in relation to the master-planning process is largely unaddressed by the literature.

- The adaptability and robustness of original layouts when faced with changing demands and needs has not been explored.

- There has been little in the way of 'post-occupancy evaluation' except perhaps with respect to housing design – and then really only at the architectural level.

6.7 End user experience

- There is little evidence-based research into the experiences of those living and working the New Towns. This is an area that would benefit from further work, into the factors that contribute to forming attachment to a New Town, and those that lead to a sense of alienation. These issues will be key to creating Growth Areas that are a success in terms of new residents' experiences.

6.8 Long term sustainability

- As a relatively recent notion, it is not surprising that sustainability of the NTs has not been evaluated in any depth – whether this applies to economics, society or the environment. We suggest research is needed in the following areas:

- The adaptability/robustness of different configurations (transport infrastructure, land use balance and distribution, layout, size, density) under different economic circumstances.

- Comparative analysis of the robustness and adaptability of different elements of physical form – street patterns, green/open space, provision of amenity space and services.

- There has been little research regarding the link between the form of NTs and community sustainability: i.e., did some types of NTs provide richer environments for community involvement, whilst others were more prone to social disaffection?

- There has been little research using other, traditional towns, as a control in terms of issues of sustainability (except with regard, possibly, to their economic robustness).

7. Future research directions and strategies

7.1 Introduction

The research reported in this document is based on a review of the literature dealing specifically with the English New Towns. It considers only, in a sense, the historical evidence, and attempts to extract lessons for the Growth Areas on a model of development which was rooted largely in an era of post-war reconstruction. This has been a seriously constraining feature of the work, and hence of the lessons derived from it, and needs to be taken into account in developing the research in the future.

One advisor on the research has expressed the view that the evaluation of a project is best undertaken at the start of a new project, and goes on to suggest that such evaluation should: *'become part of a continuous improvement process. As we move towards a culture of improvement through evaluation the challenge will be to establish appropriate measures. Both quantifiable; the easiest to achieve but often those with the least impact and qualitative which are less tangible, reflect perceptions and impact on the expression of place.'*

Below we outline some possible ways forward in the immediate and the longer terms which seek to take on-board these views, and which will allow for both quantifiable and qualitative measures of success to be developed. These tasks are framed in terms of any further evaluation of the NT programme, but have implications for the need to set up appropriate monitoring and evaluation mechanisms for the Growth Areas.

7.2 Immediate research tasks

The present research should be complemented by a further desk-based review, specifically of literature in two areas:

1. Other types of large scale development – the Expanded Towns, and New Towns outside of the New Towns Programme in England.

2. New towns internationally.

In addition, we recommend a further study that pulls together current best-practice in terms of development. This would undertake a systematic review of literature and published guidance with respect to the following key themes:

- Physical design.
- Master-planning, coding and briefing.
- Partnership arrangements.
- Community building in new development.
- Transport planning for large scale development.
- Environmental sustainability.
- Economic planning and finance for large scale development.

We also recommend a series of seminars and interviews with acknowledged experts, both practitioners and academics, with an 'open' brief re: the Growth Areas policy leading to the setting out of one or more development scenarios reflecting on the experience from the New Towns, but in addition bringing in other forms of development.

7.3 Intermediate research tasks

In light of the 2002 House of Commons Select Committee comment on the lack of evaluation of the New Towns Programme, we suggest that there is an opportunity with the Growth Areas to initiate a serious research undertaking that would properly consider the impact and direction of Growth Areas policy and practice. This might be in the form of a Growth Areas Research or Impact Unit (based on the Jubilee Extension Line Impact Assessment Unit) and in line with current recognition of the need for long term evaluation and monitoring of major development projects. Whilst a costly exercise, the funding would be extremely modest in terms of the overall cost of the Growth Areas.

Second, and possibly as a subset of the above, we recommend a series of primary research initiatives into key areas of design, finance, community building, governance and development, based on a clear and coherent strategy of identifying appropriate recent and current best practice models in the UK and elsewhere, out of which transferable lessons and implementation strategies can be derived. We are conscious that the research so far has highlighted generic lessons without testing their actual transferability, and without considering in any detail how they might be implemented. This consideration of implementation was never the intention of this project, but would be a necessary step in translating our findings into something of practical value.

7.4 Application of the present research

Finally, a little knowledge is a dangerous thing: much of what is contained in the full report, and to a degree in this document, will be a mystery to the uninitiated. The meaning of certain terms such as mixed-use, Radburn layouts etc may be obscure to the non-specialist. Our view is that if these lessons are to be applied, those charged with applying them may need some training – in an area by area basis. This would serve two purposes: first to ensure the lessons are properly understood; and second to provide an opportunity for the Growth Area teams to raise issues specific to their own development, planning, finance and locational contexts. It is our experience that training or workshops are the most user-friendly and efficient way of providing enlightenment in what might otherwise remain abstruse and difficult area of knowledge.

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Appendix: Databases searched for New Towns literature

ACOMPLINE/URBALINE: Urban management databases from the former GLC now GLA Research Library, includes articles, reports, books, press releases 1980-.

ASSIA (Applied Social Science Index & Abstracts): Applied social science articles from UK, US and international journals published since 1987.

BHI (British Humanities Index): Broad coverage including architecture and planning, music, economics and politics from 400 international daily newspapers, weekly magazines and academic journals. Covers material published since 1962.

COPAC is a union catalogue providing free access to the merged online catalogues of 24 of the largest university research libraries in the UK and Ireland plus the British Library and the National Library of Scotland. (HYPERLINK http://www.copac.ac.uk www.copac.ac.uk)

ESPRID is a free web-based European resource for researchers and policy-makers concerned with Strategic Spatial Planning in a European context, and contains material from academic books and journals, policy reports, plans and policy statements, databases and websites. (HYPERLINK http://www.esprid.org/ www.esprid.org/)

Geobase: Geography journals, includes regional and community planning materials published since 1980.

ICONDA (International construction database): Construction, environment, pollution, transport, some planning, housing, architecture. Covers material published since 1976.

Index to Theses: Theses accepted for higher degrees by the Universities of Great Britain and Ireland. Covers theses written since 1716.

IDOX: Planning, regeneration, housing, transport, local government etc. Covers articles, books and reports published since 1980.

Proquest; UK newspapers, including *Daily Mail, Daily Telegraph, Evening Standard, Financial Times, Guardian, Independent, Times* plus Sunday versions.

Regard: ESRC's free research database contains summary details of all ESRC funded research since 1985 and their associated publications and products. (HYPERLINK http://www.regard.ac.uk www.regard.ac.uk)

SIGLE (European multidisciplinary 'grey' literature e.g. reports, conference proceedings & other non-conventional published literature. Covers material published since 1980.

Sociological Abstracts: Sociology, political theory, social anthropology. Covers material published since 1963

Social Services Abstracts: Social work, human services and related areas. Covers material published since 1980

Web of Science: Combined database of the three Citation Indexes: Arts and Humanities (index only); Social Sciences (behavioural and social sciences); Science (natural, physical and biomedical sciences, some engineering). Covers material published since 1981.

Zetoc – electronic table of contents from the British Library: Covers about 20,000 current journals and conference proceedings in science, technology, medicine, engineering, business, law, finance and the humanities. Covers material published since 1993 and updated daily.