

*The Hertfordshire Guide to Growth
– Five Years On*

Research Symposium Proceedings
Centre for Sustainable Communities
University of Hertfordshire

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1. Setting the scene – guiding growth?

1.1. Welcoming remarks

The first session of the symposium to launch the *Herts Guide to Growth – Five Years On* research report was chaired by Prof. Austin Smyth, Director of the Centre for Sustainable Communities at the University of Hertfordshire.

Welcome remarks were made by the Marquess of Salisbury, Chancellor of the University of Hertfordshire. Lord Salisbury explained that his interest in this area all started with a lecture by the distinguished Cuban American New Urbanist, Andrés Duany. Lord Salisbury noted that a University Chancellor has no executive power whatsoever. However, he has one privilege - to nominate a Chancellor's lecture, and Andrés Duany's lecture was scintillating and masterly.

Lord Salisbury asked Andrés back to hold a theoretical charrette, which ended with the publication of the *Hertfordshire Guide to Growth*. This was purely theoretical: it didn't want to usurp the prerogatives of planners.

It is now five years on and a reasonable moment to reassess where we are and trace the enormous pressure for growth in the South East of England because of increased demand for housing – this is particularly true of Hertfordshire. Most of us wish that pressure was not there in a fairly populated area but further development is coming.

In Letchworth and then Welwyn development started in a highly distinguished manner. People come from everywhere including America to visit and study these places, but in the New Towns certain things went wrong, as they tried to make homes for heroes. The public lost faith in planners and urbanists. If we are going to have to develop on a fairly large scale it is incumbent that the development that does occur is of high quality; producing places people want to live and work.

That is why Lord Salisbury was so pleased the University of Hertfordshire has taken on this mantle. It fits with the University's bent for applied and academic theory. What is developed must be built right, look right and act right forever.

Lord Salisbury concluded that we have some very interesting contributions to come today and he was delighted that the University had sent along the Chairman of the Board, Mr Richard Beazley, to open proceedings.

1.2. Opening remarks

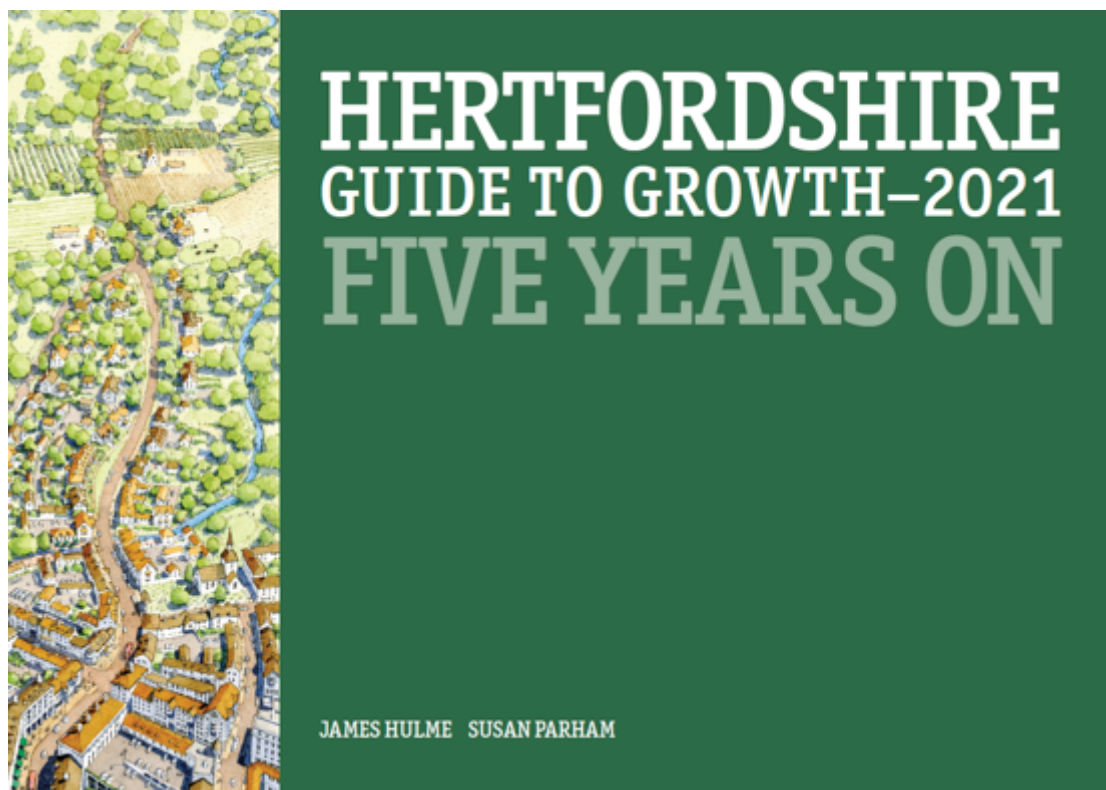
Opening remarks for the symposium were then made by Mr Richard Beazley, the Chair of the Board of Governors of the University of Hertfordshire and Vice Lord Lieutenant of Hertfordshire. Mr Beazley thanked Lord Salisbury for his hospitality and generosity in supporting the research area. He noted that this had allowed an important contribution to debate and has helped us to make progress.

Mr Beazley said that the conversation in Hertfordshire quickly turns to new housing development and most people are against that. They see a lack of infrastructure to support this: schools, hospitals, roads/more cars, a lack of car parking etc. He noted that people have fears in a deep and visceral way about new development, but, given demographic demands that can't be ignored, the issues can be toxic.

Mr Beazley said that Lord Salisbury has shown that it doesn't have to be like that. Andrés Duany enthralled us with his vision of how new communities could be established with people of all ages, backgrounds and attainment levels – whole life communities. This approach turned its back on the homogenous developments of North America. Poundbury is there for all to see.

Lord Salisbury's redevelopment of Old Hatfield and the connections to the regeneration of Hatfield Station shows that you can respond to demographic pressures in a positive way. The University of Hertfordshire is delighted to play a role in this. Mr Beazley explained that the University has been a member of the community for fifty years or more. In the University of Hertfordshire we have extensive expertise on these issues but your contributions are welcomed and will be influential.

1.3. The 'Herts Guide to Growth - Five Years On' research purpose and findings - framing the symposium



The research report authors Dr Susan Parham and Mr James Hulme addressed the symposium on *The 'Herts Guide to Growth - Five Years On' research purpose and findings - framing the symposium*. Beginning with purpose and background, the authors explained that the recent research documented in *The Hertfordshire Guide to Growth – Five Years On* reviewed the current development, design and planning situation in the county. In relation to context they noted that somewhat more than five years ago the University of Hertfordshire and our Chancellor, Lord Salisbury, had sponsored the Hertfordshire Charrette, which was guided by Andrés Duany with assistance from the BRE and Turnberry Consultants, and involved a wide range of stakeholders with interests in the future of the county. The speakers reminded participants that charrettes are intensive multi-day planning and design workshops that usually generate masterplans to guide development on specific sites.

Unusually, the Charrette had a broad focus on placemaking across the county rather than looking at just one settlement. It offered Hertfordshire residents and professionals the

opportunity to work directly with a design team developing sustainable growth strategies. That process produced the excellent *Hertfordshire Guide to Growth* (2008) report; a highly illustrated guide to the charrette. It focused on six general ‘Scenarios’ by which the county might grow in the years until 2021. It included an analysis of typical urban models, including a critique of the design of the New Town of Stevenage, and case studies, including village and hamlet extensions.

Since that time certain ‘structural’ things have changed in relation to planning. The county’s growth targets in the form of housing allocations put forward by the East of England Plan were abandoned, as was the Regional Spatial Strategy (the ‘RSS’). The National Planning Policy Framework (the ‘NPPF’) and the new Localism and Decentralisation Act came into force. Yet similar issues for the county remain: how to deal sustainably with pressures and requirements for growth; how to improve resilience in relation to the environment, and the social and economic life of the county; and how to harness the benefits of development while minimising any cost to communities.

Against this backdrop it seemed timely to review where we have come from and consider directions for the future in relation to the county’s future development in the light of the ideas generated by the *Hertfordshire Guide to Growth*. An intensive three-month research project has produced the report being launched at the symposium: the *Hertfordshire Guide to Growth – Five Years On (2014)*.

Susan and James explained among key findings that the planning changes brought in by the National Planning Policy Framework have had a significant impact on the preparation of growth strategies across Hertfordshire. Household projections across the south east of England are continuing to vastly outpace supply. Satisfying the demand for residential development in Hertfordshire will continue to be challenging, with some forecast undersupply across the county over the plan period, although the degree of certainty about supply varies by area.

The research found that *The Herts Guide to Growth* has influenced planning, design and development in the county and beyond in the more than five years since publication although few see much likelihood that a stand-alone new Garden City could be built in the county. Design ideas like ‘transport oriented development’ that was promulgated through the original *Guide to Growth* have had limited impact, although these principles of transport orientation have been embraced by one authority (Watford) which is reusing railway infrastructure to help structure growth around transport access at the Croxley Rail Link. In the north and east of the county, where large-scale housing growth is predicated, one large urban extension, effectively a new town, at Harlow North is under consideration, while a stand alone ‘Garden Village’ is tentatively proposed for Rush Green in North Herts.

The reduction of car dependency by better settlement planning is regarded as a desirable goal but Authorities generally have little confidence that concomitant infrastructure provision is deliverable, particularly public transport and specifically rail. That said, aside from the examples of transport oriented developments offered above, there is no certainty that even existing public transport provision across the county will be optimised by new development.

It was worth noting that plans for other sustainable features of new development, including district heating, are emergent in some urban locations. In fact, the researchers found that principles of environmental sustainability have been embraced in the adoption of housing standards across the county, and building regulations are still seen as the principal lever for improving energy performance.

It is also positive to note that all Local Authorities within the county recognise the value of collaborative planning, and that some are already dedicating resources to effectively

programmed consultation on sites brought forward for development (see Case Studies in the report). In several cases these are direct outcomes of the Hertfordshire Charrette and *The Guide to Growth*. Authorities who have yet to determine development sites are committed to consultation on their Local Plans and further site-specific collaborative planning policies downstream of Plan adoption. Good practice related to collaborative process includes through a number of charrette workshops including for Old Hatfield, for Mill Green, through Look! St Albans and at Dacorum.

A number of examples of good practice in development and ‘placemaking’ design can be found in the county, which are in line with the principles set out in *The Hertfordshire Guide to Growth* through its ‘urban village’ settlement model. In relation to places, these include work by Gascoyne Cecil Estates to regenerate parts of Old Hatfield including housing in Dunham Yard and Arm and Sword Lane, and the complete renewal of Salisbury Square. Other examples include the redevelopment of Hatfield Station and transport-oriented developments at Watford.

In defining conclusions from the research, the speakers noted that with fifty percent of Local Plans in Hertfordshire still undetermined, it is too early to say whether the total number of dwellings (along with supporting social and economic infrastructure) will be greater or fewer than that determined in the (abandoned) Regional Spatial Strategy. The evidence of the Local Plans completed by Local Authorities to date, and those in draft, suggests that the high numbers of new homes will be maintained, albeit over a longer timeframe than previously supposed.

At the same time, in Hertfordshire many large strategic sites will only be viable if the scheme crosses local authority boundaries. It is recognised by local planning authorities that they will need to engage constructively, actively and on an ongoing basis to maximise the effectiveness of Local Plan preparation relating to strategic cross boundary matters. The Hertfordshire Infrastructure and Planning Partnership (HIPP) and its related officer group, the Hertfordshire Planning Group (HPG), can both play an important role in helping to co-ordinate such activity to meet strategic objectives in regard to housing need and other infrastructure.

Many of the design scenarios proposed by *The Hertfordshire Guide to Growth* remain relevant design solutions for the extension and regeneration of urban centres across the county. There is scope for the urban typologies explored in the Guide to contribute greatly to environmental performance, social cohesion and economic vitality as the county grows. The active promotion of high quality urban design (based on *The Hertfordshire Guide to Growth* definition) at the scale of a new neighbourhood or urban quarter is needed. This is because the scope of anticipated development in the county means many schemes of this size will be coming forward in future.

The HIPP, as the convening body for strategic spatial planning across the county, could incorporate and express the principles of good urban design (promoting exemplars, producing guidance) in its promotion of new neighbourhoods, as well as revived urban centres and suburbs. It is hoped that the HIPP will also support this through its continued development of a Hertfordshire Spatial Plan (and possibly a county structure plan?) by which it optimizes opportunities for cohesive community and neighbourhood planning, including cross boundary working and utilisation of shared infrastructure (e.g. new public transport).

It would seem important at both county strategic and local authority level to give more attention to developing Charrette capacity for engaging in complex settlement design and planning issues, alongside design, planning, infrastructure and economic development promotion and integration efforts

1.4. Question and Answer Session

This presentation was followed by a brief Q&A session moderated by Prof Austin Smyth.

Q1: How can planning regimes work without sufficient guidance and enlightened approaches? Is a design led approach possible without national design guidance?

JH: In the new era of limited central guidance, with four years of the National Planning Policy Framework we are unlikely to see 'bolt-ons'. What is positive is its being seen that there are shortcomings in site allocation process – how we do cross boundary design led approaches. Local development orders are positive. People in government regret the sweeping away of design guidance and structures like the Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment (CABE). Principles that govern Local Development Orders and design will be seen to increase their influence.

Q2: Architectural design review is enshrined in the National Planning Policy Framework but I am concerned that we will end up with fragmented development. We don't want stuff like Hatfield Aerodrome. I am glad that you didn't rule out high-rise.

SP: I am not sure that high-rise has proved particularly robust as a model but recent work on a mid-rise solution for London, for example, seems to have more cogency. I also think transect based approaches have a lot going for them, to allow different kinds of densities and placeshaping according to particular attributes of the location from very urban to very rural.

Q3: We have won some funds from the Planning Advisory Service (PAS) to trial Local Development Orders. They are using high density/high-rise solutions at the former Shredded Wheat factory building in Stevenage. What are the best exemplars?

JH: The charrette process and the built outcomes from that. The Hertfordshire Infrastructure and Planning Partnership (HIPP) and Heads of Planning Group process are also good. Do we need a new county structure plan?

SP: I agree with James about this. We didn't capture all the good practice that is underway but connections between engagement with people and great design and planning outcomes on the ground are very much worth celebrating.

Q4: Why not a new Garden City?

JH: It would be hard to get it to work - to get all the ducks in a row.

SP: Its worth remembering that the Herts Guide to growth suggested a new garden City was the most optimal solution for Hertfordshire in terms of delivering a sustainable place for well into the future. In our Wolfson Economics Prize Entry on developing a new Garden City that I recently wrote with Anthony Downs from Gascoyne Cecil, and Gavin Murray and Pablo Fernandez from Brooks Murray Architects, we explored how and if it might be possible. We suggested three variations might work depending on circumstances: a stand-alone Garden City, new Garden City inspired Suburbs, and repaired Garden Cities/Suburbs on previously developed land.

2. Planning and design issues that growth must address

After a break, Session Two addressed planning and design issues that growth must address and was moderated by Dr Susan Parham, Head of Urbanism from the University of Hertfordshire's Centre for sustainable Communities.

2.1. Public transport and accessibility as a key dimension

The first speaker in the second session was Mr Adrian Hames of WSP who spoke to the topic *public transport and accessibility as a key dimension*. Adrian started by outlining to participants some key land use facts, about travel patterns in Hertfordshire – and noted that this was about homes and jobs, and strategic employment sites. What this means is a need for improved east–west transport infrastructure for example. Adrian looked at the possible future, best practice examples and next steps.

In terms of demographics in the period 2001 to 2011 the county saw population growth in its rather complex settlement pattern comprised of many urban centres including Garden Cities and New Towns across its ten district. In travel terms it has strong relationships to London and Cambridge but there is also a need to look at the local level about the nature of this population. For example, Hatfield has very mixed demographics.

One issue is the relationship of homes to jobs, which drives travel patterns and future growth areas – this changes the shape of travel. In terms of homes to jobs – Adrian explored how the existing transport network operates, including travel within or with its origin or destination in Hertfordshire. In Adrian's view the relationship between infrastructure and travel patterns is the missing link in thinking about travel in Hertfordshire. There is a need for East West transport infrastructure to match North-South movement, which currently acts as a constraint to East-West growth. If you create the right transport the jobs will come.

Talking about mode shift Adrian noted that currently, for journeys to work between Hertford and Hatfield 91.1% are made by car, but the possible future is that Hertfordshire needs to compete with Cambridge and Oxford and take advantage of its location near London. For instance North London Biospace and Cambridge are the highest UK investment locations and Hertford is in the middle. Thus a focus is needed on strategic employment sites, which will attract global business and act as economic drivers. These in turn need to be close to quality homes and a mix of homes to suit employment. Passenger transport is the key to this. Adrian cited the importance of the A414 corridor encompassing Hertford – Hatfield and St Albans and the Hemel Arc to facilitate east-west movement. Think big!

In relation to Bus Rapid Transit, BRT is used worldwide as a means of moving people across a range of differing sized catchment areas. From smaller towns and cities of under 250,000 up to a catchment of 3.2million in Curitiba, Brazil. Adrian cited a number of best practice examples of transport projects that seemed to be getting it right. This included the West of England MetroBus, the TfGM Leigh Busway, the Cambridge City Deal, and the Luton to Dunstable Busway. The West of England scheme, for example, comprises a network of three schemes branded as MetroBus, funded to the tune of £200m and encompassing 35km of bus priority lanes. This is expected to facilitate 72,000 new homes and 74,000 new jobs by 2026. Adrian pointed out that the economic cost of congestion is estimated to be £600m per year by 2016 and the scheme promises to relieve that by taking on 23,000 passengers per day (up to 5 million passengers per year). For the TfGM Leigh Busway, its 22km route is being developed at a cost of £80m and this is expected to facilitate economic growth and regeneration along its transport corridor, serving two million passengers per year. Of its users, 20% are previous car

users, 8% are new trips generated by the existence of the service and 72% are existing bus passengers.

For the Cambridge City Deal, the Cambridgeshire Guided Busway comprises 25km of infrastructure, which has cost £86-160m! 2,500,000 trips were made in the first year of operation, which was 40% higher than the predicted figure. There have been 3,457,354 passengers in the year up to August 6, 2014 – three years since it opened. The projections had targeted 3.5 million passengers at this stage. Currently the Busway is being extended to link to a new Science Park station. More broadly the Cambridge Transport Strategy's focus is on creating transport conditions that maintain the economic growth. For the Luton – Dunstable Busway meanwhile the impetus is the ability to deliver a new growth area with an intention to create 43,000 new houses and 26,000 new jobs based on the provision of the Busway. There have been 1.3 million passengers in the first year on the 13.4 km, £90m scheme. Investment has come before homes and jobs.

In conclusion, Adrian considered next steps in relation to transport and accessibility in Hertfordshire and its relationship to growth. He saw a need for co-ordinated planning at County Level, and a 'refresh' in terms of strategic infrastructure priorities. Central to this was an acknowledgement of the close spatial interconnection needed between strategic employment and quality homes. He touched on the role of the LEP and political consensus and the need for passenger transport promotion – to think bold early on and engage people given the fairly long-term delivery timescales ie 7-10 years for major schemes. Adrian also looked here at how we get funding – and mentioned infrastructure investment, the Community Infrastructure level (CIL), landowners and major schemes. His message was: make Hertfordshire great!

Having said all that Adrian asked how we get authorities and communities to engage on this agenda? He saw a strong role for the LEP and for SEP. This needed to connect to countywide infrastructure priorities – in turn connected to political and public acceptance. Adrian finished by arguing for co-ordinated local planning – joint working to deliver good transport outcomes at a strategic level.

2.2. Social effects and benefits of good urban planning and design

The second speaker in the session was Mr Matthew Bradbury of The Land Trust who spoke on the *social effects and benefits of good urban planning design*. Matthew focused in particular on the role of green space and noted that in the UK thirty-three million people make more than 2.5 billion visits to urban green spaces alone. Eighty-five per cent of people surveyed felt that the quality of public space and the built environment has a direct impact on their lives and on the way they feel (Cabe). But having access to public space is not all that matters – just as important are the planning, design and management of that space. The National Planning Policy Framework clearly identifies green infrastructure as a key pillar in delivering sustainable development for local communities.

Matthew asked whether we have we lost the ability to recognise the intrinsic value of nature? The Land Trust vision is to improve the quality of people's lives by creating sustainable, high quality green spaces that deliver environmental, social and economic benefits. Its five charitable objectives are to work with their partners to achieve high quality green spaces in order to improve environment, health, learning, economic vitality and cohesion of communities and individuals. It has a range of members including the National Trust, The TCPA, Groundwork and others.

2000HA



Of land under management.

6654HA

Of land in our pipeline.

£50M

Amount of value added to housing around just one of our spaces.

-  Sites under management
-  Sites/projects with Land Trust involvement



The Land Trust has sixty sustainably managed green spaces all around the country. They hold an investment portfolio of circa £112 million and growing including nature reserves, country parks, public realm, urban fringe, play areas, playing fields, marshland, grassland, woodland, wetland, 'wasteland'; flood defence areas, cycle route, cut throughs, dog walking routes, running route, horse riding bridleways, 'kick about' areas, venues for adventure, and places for a stroll... These are all managed by partners.

People may be interested in their local space but not every one wants to be a 'park owner' or 'manager'. To suit all needs and build capacity within communities, they have developed a six level process. Matthew quoted Theodore Roosevelt to the effect that

'Conservation means development as much as it does protection. I recognize the right and duty of this generation to develop and use the natural resources of our land; but I do not recognize the right to waste them, or to rob, by wasteful use, the generations that come after us.' Similarly John Ruskin said that 'The measure of any great civilisation is in its cities, and a measure of a city's greatness is to be found in the quality of its public spaces, its parks and its squares.'

The Land Trust argument is that well planned and designed sustainable green infrastructure improves health and well-being, promotes a sense of community, provides essential environmental services, contributes to prosperity and safeguards environmental quality.

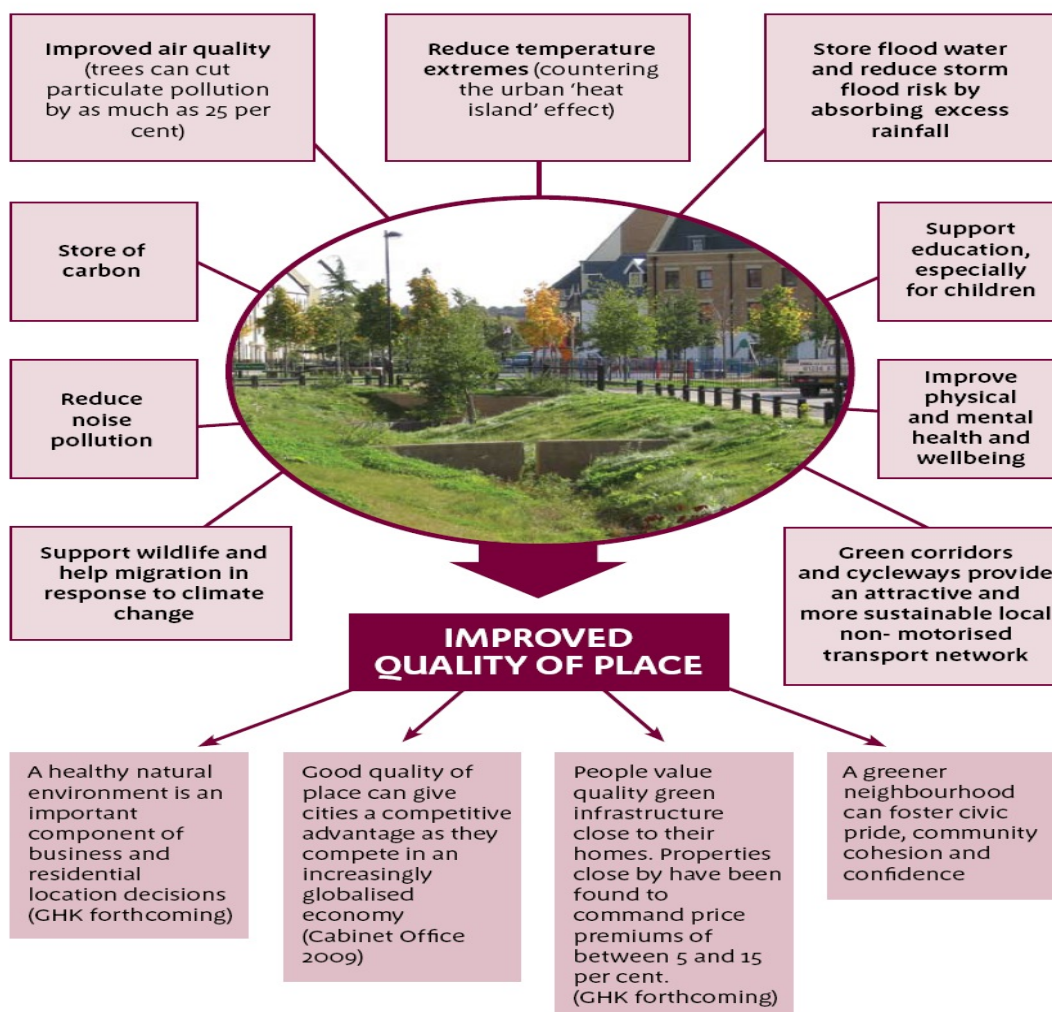


The wider environment in which the Land Trust operates dictates that they must grasp the moment and plan positively for our green infrastructure – in some cases for existing settlements and always as an integral part of new development. The Land Trust’s green infrastructure assets range from:

- Parks and gardens to city farms
- Country parks/woodland & wildlife sites to play areas
- Commons to SSSIs
- Allotments to urban plazas
- Greenways – Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SUDs)
- Landscape scale – pocket parks
- Community woodlands - street trees
- Cycleways to village greens
- LEAPS to nature reserves
- Greenbelt – brownfield

This is about placemaking because high quality sustainable green spaces provide an essential component in creating great places and sustainable, cohesive communities. So, what are “high quality green spaces”? The Land Trust argues that these are well designed, sustainable, multifunctional, integrated, connected, accessible spaces providing multiple environmental benefits and services, secured for the long-term. This is about multi-functionality and about valuing nature and turning urban areas into quality places.

Turning urban areas into quality places – green infrastructure and ecosystem services



Matthew noted that around eighty-three percent more individuals engage in social activity in green spaces as opposed to concreted ones (Benefits of Green Infrastructure, Forest Research, 2010). Around sixty-five percent of adults reported that the provision of nearby green spaces is important to them (British Market Research Bureau's report to Defra, 2007). That report demonstrated that where communities are integrated and involved with their green space, there is significantly less antisocial behaviour, and they link design, wellbeing and community cohesion.

At the Land Trust, they promote ownership with a small 'o'. They believe ownership is about enabling a genuine and long-term relationship between people, communities and the open space around them. Empowering communities to take ownership projects, from design to delivery and beyond. It means removing the hurdles - allowing the community to focus on the achievable; ensuring that future generations are still involved rather than creating a transient band of disillusioned and disenfranchised volunteers; and emotional ownership without the liabilities.

They focus on the health benefits of green space. A brisk walk every day in a local green space can reduce the risk of heart attacks, strokes and diabetes by 50%, some cancers by 30% and Alzheimers by 25% (Blue Sky Green Space). "We've found that living in an urban area with relatively high levels of green space can have a significantly positive impact on wellbeing, roughly equal to a third of the impact of being married." (Dr Mathew White,

European Centre for the Environment and Human Health). “For people living busy lifestyles in densely populated areas, being able to get outdoors and access green space is a great way to escape the stresses of day-to-day life” (Beth Murphy, Mind). Thus, evidence shows that access to green spaces can:

- Save lives and improves quality of life
- Help local authorities with pressing social, health & wellbeing issues
- Reduce stress, anxiety & depression
- Enhance social interaction & promote independent living
- Help promote & sustain increased physical activity

Natural England estimate that if the whole English population had equally easy access to green spaces, and consequently all were 24% more likely to be physically active, the life-cost averted saving to the NHS would be around £2.1 billion per annum.

Green space also has economic benefits. A view of a park is shown to raise house prices by 8%, and simply having a park nearby by 6% (*The Value of Public Space*, CABE Space). The evidence suggests that high quality green space provides an attractive location for working and living, which provides property price uplift, helps to sell new homes, attracts inward investment, supports employment, and attracts visitors. Green space also has educational benefits. A high quality green space provides “A living, breathing, fully interactive and continually changing outdoor classroom.” This includes ‘Hands on’ Learning, in an environment that can engage and motivate excluded young people to gain confidence through learning about farming, gardening, conservation, food growing, training and apprenticeships such as Green Angels.

There is a range of environmental benefits from green space. These include the capacity to protect and enhance biodiversity, for climate change/proofing, for carbon sequestration, supporting landscape character. A number are about water, air and heat effects: improving drainage and reducing flood risk, improving water quality, improving air quality, and offering heat amelioration and cooling. Green space also offers sustainable transport routes, sites for local food production, renewable energy, ecosystem services and ecological networks. At the landscape scale, its about protection and interpretation of heritage and protecting soils.

By providing a range of environmental, health and social benefits, green spaces contribute to reducing the costs incurred by government in addressing these challenges. Green spaces are thus able to provide a number of indirect economic benefits to society. Urban green spaces offer children a space for unrestricted, versatile and ‘challenging’ play in a social environment. In doing so, they help to improve children’s creativity, cognitive and motor skills, emotional resilience and socialisation. Demos (*A Child’s Place*, 2004) points out: ‘The worse a local environment looks, the less able children are to play freely, and develop the habits and commitments that will enable them to address environmental problems in the future.’

This is connected to ‘sense of place’. In Matthew’s view place making is not about technical design but encompasses the integration of green infrastructure with other ‘shared’ facilities, sustainable connected communities, social return on investment, culture, art, music, literature and sport. The experience in Hertfordshire of Garden City principles underpins much of this approach. Thus Matthew explored a number of lessons from practice based on these insights including ‘getting it wrong’. The five main reasons given by the public for not visiting parks are lack of or poor condition of facilities, undesirable users, concerns about dogs and dog mess, safety and security, and environmental problems such as litter and vandalism (*Improving urban parks, play areas and green spaces*, DTLR 2002).

Matthew concluded by pointing out that design and maintenance cannot be separated. “Many of the UK’s 27,000 urban public parks suffered from a steady decline in quality during the last decades”. Excellent design, quality and practicality need to be allied with long-term management, funding and climate proofing. Long-term funding streams are needed through endowments, Section 106 payments, service charges, renewables, the Community Infrastructure Levy, fundraising, events and other site revenue sources. Asking again *whether we have lost the ability to recognise the intrinsic value of nature?* Matthew quoted as follows: “A thing is right when it tends to preserve the integrity, stability and beauty of the biotic community. It is wrong when it tends otherwise” (Aldo Leopold).

2.3. Participant Discussion

Following the speakers there was a panel discussion and Question and Answer session, with panellists Dr Tom Day of the Herts and Middlesex Wildlife Trust, Mr Matthew Bradbury and Mr Adrian Hames.

Q1: Is cycling something that Hertfordshire should embrace?

A: Yes. Cambridge is a success story in this respect.

Q2: The sheer pressure of traffic in Hertfordshire, arising from short journeys, is a problem. Is there a response to this from the panel?

A: If there are alternatives to driving, traffic congestion is not a problem. (C.f. Cambridge experience, where car travel is slow, and cycling is a viable alternative.) Travel planning is important, looking at cycling and walking, especially in relation to school journeys.

Q3: Local Enterprise Partnerships are providing a lot of strategic leadership, much of which is outside of the democratic process. Are current initiatives being thought through?

A: Not necessarily. Bold, strategic thinking and leadership is needed at a county-wide level.

Q4: Are we being ambitious enough in relation to east-west links across the county?

A: We need to offer infrastructure that is commercially viable, such as park and ride schemes.

Q5: Should we not also consider diagonal movement across the county, and not just east-west, or north-south?

A: Yes. East-west is a key route. Hertfordshire has a number of urban centres. It would be good if they were all linked, including diagonally.

Q6: Is there not an elephant in the room, i.e. a link between Stansted, Stevenage and Luton?

A6: It is up to the county to decide what its priorities are.

Q7: Do you have any lessons for us in terms of engaging young people in relation to planning and transport?

A7: Through the right initiatives and programmes, this is entirely possible. Young children don’t have the baggage of cynicism, but do have lots of enthusiasm.

Q8: Is there a role to be played by land use planning in relation to congestion reduction measures?

A8: Yes; but we need to recognise freedom of choice in relation to travel modes.

Q9: Shouldn't master planning look at localised food production (including allotments at home)? Also, shouldn't we capitalise on the county's rich stock of footpaths and walkways?

A: Yes: we should include food growing in master planning. Yes: we need to include footpaths and walkways early on in master planning processes.

3. Building new places – development, design and planning perspectives from Scotland

After a lunch break, Session Three focused on *Building new places – development, design and planning perspectives from Scotland* and was moderated and introduced by Mr Paul Roberts, Director of Turnberry Consulting. This session encompassed short presentations and discussion of placemaking activities ‘on the ground’ in Scotland. We were fortunate to have two speakers and discussion panel members who are developing the new settlement of Chapelton of Elsick, south of Aberdeen. The first speaker was the Earl of Southesk, from the Elsick Development Company. The second speaker was the Earl of Aboyne, the director of AJC Scotland Limited, which is one of the building firms involved in building houses in Chapelton.

3.1. Introductory remarks

Paul Roberts explained that he worked on the original *Herts Guide to Growth*. To introduce the session he planned to provide a summary of urban design and planning in Great Britain in seven minutes. Paul noted that the same issues happened everywhere – an inability to build any quality whereas the earlier settlements of New Lanark, Port Sunlight and Bournville (Cadbury Rowntree) were examples of the resolution of crisis through enduring schemes.

The change came in with the Ebenezer Howard scale post WW1 with his ‘prospectus’ for building Garden Cities - and today that is happening again. One Garden City wasn't enough. Howard wanted to do Welwyn too. This grew in a mixed use way. Then there were political changes in the 1920s and 1930s that meant that didn't really happen.

By the post war period the New Towns programme had emerged. That was the largest planned towns programme ever but came with issues in the 1940s to 80s of the ‘megastructure’. It was not evolutionary: you can't retrofit it. Post the New Towns it became extraordinarily hard to build new settlements (Poundbury is one of very few). Since the *Herts Guide to Growth* was finished Chapelton happened. That came about through simple courage.

3.2. Developing Chapelton in Aberdeenshire: presentation by David Southesk

Lord Southesk explained that Chapelton is some five miles south of Aberdeen. Looking at the road structure you can see where development makes sense. The context was that the Greater Aberdeen area was expected to have 72,000 new houses but planning officials interpreted this as new houses being placed in odd parts of the green belt. If you want to see how not to do development go to Portlethen where there was a concern the town would end up with sprawl linkages between local settlements.

Thus the alternative to Chapelton was the ‘preferred option’ in the local development plan. Fortunately, the council rejected the planning officials recommendation to refuse permission to develop Chapelton and supported it. Having one developer makes the process simpler and means communities do not have to face the same planning issues every five years. Instead, by planning and building a whole new settlement the challenge of new development has been sorted for forty years. There was lots of opposition to Chapelton from other developers who were assuming that their land in the ‘preferred options’ areas would be developed.

The first house will be completed this month and the charrette process to develop the town's master plan was excellent. If you overlaid the town's site map over a plan of Edinburgh its a self sustainable scale. People really enjoyed the charrette process. It was the largest private development ever in the country and has had a good master planning process. Landscape character has been the place to start and very little of natural character has been lost. They

began with no preconceptions. The place is based on walk ability radii; it has 40% green space over a site of 2,000 acres, with 8,000 housing units which are very much mixed.

An issue was to plan the town centre successfully given the problems that existing ones have. There is a major retail unit but its bulk is hidden and parking is tucked into a human scale urban form. The town's development to the master plan is working in phases. They have outline planning permission for the first 4,000 units and there is a 40 year plan for the whole thing. The Elswick development company has paid for all the infrastructure which simplifies the development process and building. They did detailed watercolours and CGIs to help people understand what is proposed and got some commercial and services land uses in early.



Hume Square, Chapelton, CGI visualisation Source: Brooks Murray Architects

(They have done a kind of Radburn layout in some places with pedestrian focused frontages and parking access to the rear of houses). Both the planning department and traffic planners were very nervous so they tried to train them up on design principles. They looked at what the competition were offering and found that it was not sympathetic ie there were no house types with master bedrooms on the ground floor which suit an ageing population. They tried to get 'contemporary' architectural design but without the 'hard to live in' too much glass option.

They established a design framework and Pattern Book for the town and explained that it is in people's interests to do to this. There is broadband to each house with fibre optic cable and other significant infrastructure work is underway. They are now in the sales phase and the town has a visitor centre and tea house and people can cycle there on a new cycle path. Links to further information and images of Chapelton can be found at:

<http://chapeltonofelsick.com/vision/>
<http://chapeltonofelsick.com/gallery/>

3.3. Building Chapelton - presentation by Alasdair Aboyne

Lord Aboyne's company AJC is one of three developers working at Chapelton. They started out to renovate houses on his estate and invested in apprenticeships, and employed local craftsmen. The company has worked on domestic houses, a cheese factory and affordable housing among other projects. His early impressions of Chapelton were that he could see that they had achieved an amazing amount in the timeframe to date.

Chapelton as a building project came out of the blue compared with the site allocations that developers expected to go with. It became apparent that Chapelton would work. Lord Aboyne's company started with a tranche of sixty houses and these are being constructed based on a good trust arrangement with the Elswick Development Company.

AJC are currently constructing twenty-six houses and these have stringent standards for the 'kit' (internal structure) construction. The edge of the new town is less dense and it will get denser near the middle. There are very prescriptive design requirements and a number of house types with names referring to Scottish dukes. Already thirty houses have sold off the plan. So the town is beginning as a place and developing its sense of community.



Example of new house construction in Chapelton Source: Brooks Murray Architects

3.4. Panel Discussion

Following the speakers' presentations, a brief discussion with participants ensued which was moderated by Mr Paul Roberts. Introducing the plenary discussion, and remarking on the process of developing Chapelton, Paul Roberts noted the difficulties of getting local planning authorities to accept good design, with an eighteen-month debate to get a wall mounted street light one example, and frustrations about issues including drainage.

Comment 1: There has been an enormous amount of great information. Hertfordshire needs to reflect its own model and culture. The question is how will you disseminate information so community can become more informed and involved? How can the needs of young people be addressed? What about disability provision? We have here a good example of balance

between tradition and modernity. In our village over 200 people compete for open space provision. In a new vision I would like open space to be preserved. Growth is not just about sustainability but about maintaining quality of life for the aged and others. Hertfordshire has a big, older population.

PR: Chapelton is offering an extraordinarily broad range of house types to meet diversity of needs - economic, physical, age etc. They have the courage to do that.

DS: Forty percent of the new town is open space and there is a hierarchy of open space including a Sustainable Urban Drainage basin. The elderly can use green space because it is in walking distance. They have talked to local disabled groups about access.

Q: After you have finished Chapelton can you please do one in Herts? Is there any social housing?

DS: Yes, some 13% of the housing over the whole development is social housing. It is pepper potted so looks the same as the market housing. There is a Section 106 agreement and some £56 million is being spent on schools.

Q: Is there a market for these houses?

PR: Yes there is a very active housing market there. There is the issue of 'premium' differences. They did a smallish tranche of houses first to test the market. They explained to the local authority that they needed to stage infrastructure in such a way that it makes sense financially. It is worth remembering that issues regarding financing also happened at Letchworth when it was first built.

Q: What is expected to be the long-term future of the development? Stewardship? Who gets the uplift in value?

PR: On the last point, that is hard to forecast.

DS: We have formed a community interest company plus a community charge.

Q: Is there a design code? How to developers differentiate their products?

DS: They adjust internal layouts and specifications. There is some flexibility in terms of exterior, sizes, time frames and landscaping.

Q: Is water captured?

DS: We have no shortage of water...

4. Hertfordshire - lessons from the past, challenges for the future

After an afternoon tea break the concluding session explored *Hertfordshire - lessons from the past, challenges for the future* and was moderated by Mr Anthony Downs of Gascoyne Cecil Estates.

4.1. Letchworth as a model? Past, present and future

The session began with a presentation, *Letchworth as a model? Past, present and future* from Mr John Lewis, the CEO of the Letchworth Garden City Heritage Foundation.



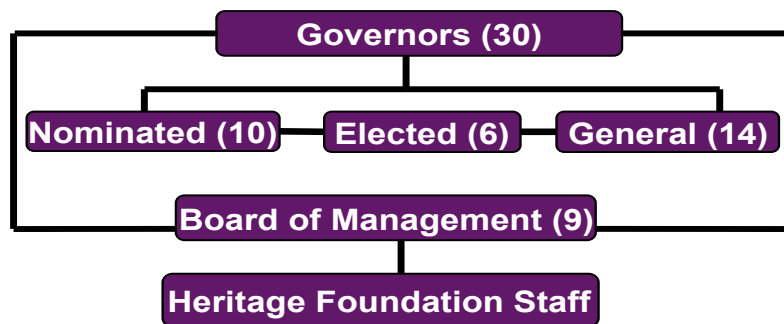
John Lewis noted that the Heritage Foundation is a self-funded charitable organisation reinvesting for the long-term benefit of communities in Letchworth Garden City. They support, fund and promote activities for Letchworth Garden City communities. Much of their work is about value capture in a range of areas including health and well-being, education and learning, charitable activities, recreation and leisure, environment and heritage, charities and communities in Letchworth are at the heart of these activities. The Foundation has assets worth £128 million and an annual income of £10 million pounds. The community return is £4.5 million.

The Town's structure of governance and management reflects the Garden City principles set out by Ebenezer Howard. There are 30 governors, of whom ten are nominated, six elected and fourteen are general. The Foundation also has a board of management as a subset of the governors and the Heritage Foundation staff work to this group and ultimately to the wider governors group.

The principles upon which the town is governed, managed and developed go back to Ebenezer Howard's original ideas encapsulated in his book *Tomorrow: A peaceful path to real reform*. Of course Letchworth was the first Garden City to be developed and thus has a

historic importance in the history of garden cities as well as in contemporary living. The images show aspects of the way Letchworth is planned including its town centre, walkable green spaces, parks and housing areas. Its ‘arts and crafts’ influenced architecture has proved very appealing. The City has a range of valuable social infrastructure that the Foundation supports.

Heritage Foundation - Governance



Source: Letchworth Heritage Foundation presentation

John explained that the planning and development of Letchworth is governed by a Scheme of Management and its design is predicated on a number of principles about physical space design including tree lined corridors, vistas, group value, gardens, public open space, the separation of cars from front gardens and a maximum density of 30 dwellings per hectare. This does not mean that Letchworth is just a place that preserves the past – it is a living city. Among recent or recently announced development are a new arts centre, a newly digital 4 screen cinema complex, a new creative arts school, and transformations to its public realm. The City is a lively ‘place to be’.

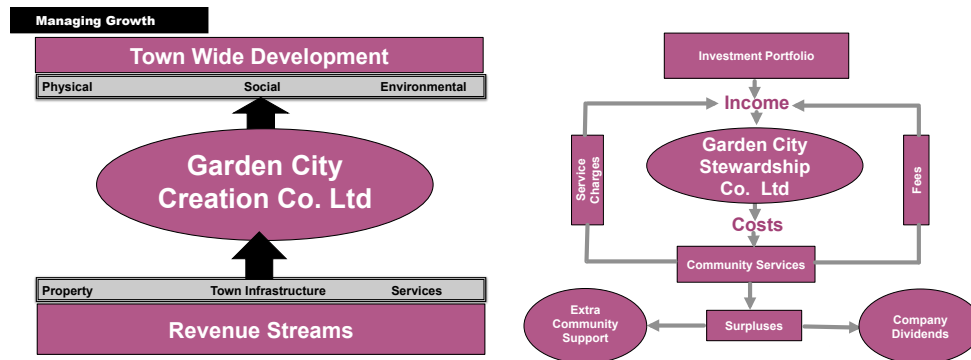
Recently the City’s Governors considered whether more homes should be built in Letchworth and undertook a very substantial consultation process which the University of Hertfordshire helped facilitate and report on as an objective ‘outsider’ to the process. The Foundation ran the process on a completely open basis on behalf of the Governors before any decision had been made about whether this development should happen. Among a number of ways the Foundation consulted with the local community was to deliver 15,841 postcards to homes and businesses in Letchworth Garden City and the Foundation ran a two week exhibition in the town centre to explain in detail the proposals and the expert evidence behind them, and to solicit views from the community. The process resulted in some editorial comment from the local press. A journalist from The Comet visited the exhibition and interviewed John Lewis.

The Advertiser conducted a telephone interview with John. There was also three consecutive weeks of advertising in the press about the process to help ensure the community knew it was happening and they had ways to make their views known.

The process managed by Dr Susan Parham from the University of Hertfordshire resulted in

139 Facebook comments, 143 web forms and emails, 673 visitors to the exhibition, 156 comments cards being filled in and 58 forum posts being received. An online Community Panel was convened and 309 residents took part in a qualitative survey and 40 residents took part in a qualitative forum. Susan reported back on results from all these sources to the City's governors and this assisted in their decision about the right way forward for future development.

This process sat within a wider structure for managing growth with key connections and structural relationships shown in the two diagrams below. Key to this are the three strands of the Foundation's work at Letchworth to plan, to manage and to re-invest in the City in line with Ebenezer Howard's original vision.



Source: Letchworth Heritage Foundation presentation

4.2. Panel Discussion Session

A panel of symposium speakers was then convened comprising Mr John Lewis (Letchworth Garden City Heritage Foundation), Lord Southesk (Elsick Development Company), Ms Vanessa Gregory (Look! St. Albans), Mr John Boyd (JB Planning) and Mr James Hulme (House Builders Association). The panel discussion was moderated by Mr Anthony Downs (Gascoyne Cecil).

Q1: Is an enlightened landowner a pre-requisite for housing development of the quality we have seen today?

A: I don't know: it probably helps... Scale, on the other hand, is an important pre-requisite, as it is difficult to construct such quality housing on smaller sites. It needs to be sufficient to make costs relative to benefits work - to make the development commercially viable.

A: It doesn't have to be a traditional landowner if you can take a long view on the investment. The nature of the investment could also be instrumental in this respect, e.g. pension funds.

Q2: A question rather than a rant. What about having a discrete garden city? Would a discrete garden city in Hertfordshire adversely impact upon Letchworth Garden City?

A: The key housing issues confronting the county are affordability and choice. If we want to maintain the status quo then Letchworth Garden City needs to expand a little into the green belt to the north. This is about representing need. It is not about displacement. People wanted to go on living in Letchworth affordably and need was significant. It was not just about what would sell well.

Q3: What are your thoughts on Neighbourhood Planning as a process? What advice would you give to residents?

A: You need people with energy and commitment, who are going to work together in a multidisciplinary way. You also need to mix residents with professionals in this process. St Albans district neighbourhood plans took a bottom up approach, a neighbourhood planning approach.

A: Neighbourhood Plans are still in their early stages. It's a new area of planning - everybody is learning at the moment. You can get mixed motives for developing a neighbourhood plan. You often get people with mixed motives participating, including people who simply seek to block everything that is being proposed.

A: Some movements have begun.

Q.4: Do you think that Hertfordshire County Council should have some ownership or leadership role vis-à-vis the charrette process and the Herts Guide to Growth?

A: Some movements have begun to respond to outcomes from the charrette process. I am working in the spirit of neighbourhood planning, but interested in design for places that are currently not fit for purpose. Charrette processes don't just have to be professionals only. But funding is an issue. Having 100 people working on a plan is really fantastic.

A: Hertfordshire County Council is not a planning authority. It works with local authorities but no longer has a strategic planning function.

4.3. Rapporteur's summary

Dr Parham from the Centre for Sustainable Communities said that it had been a fascinating day. She had felt like a nervous diner party host -hoping everyone was having a good time, enjoying the conversation and even flirting with new ideas. She thought about trying to produce a thematic summary but that was beyond her powers. Instead she planned to briefly touch on some points that struck her from each session and say a little bit about next steps.

Session One showed quite clearly that this agenda really matters. By this Susan meant how we plan, design, and build new places to work with and add value to what we have rather than the reverse. Both Lord Salisbury and Mr Richard Beazley really set out the paradoxical position we are in: we have to do something very well, which we don't necessarily want to do. Andres Duany's pioneering role in all this was rightly celebrated and some of the streams that flowed from the original Herts Guide to Growth of 2008 were touched on.

Susan said that she and James Hulme had tried to convey a little about why they did the research, what they found out and what that might mean for the future. So she didn't plan to reprise that content except to say than more than five years on it seems worth looking at how much traction the original charrette results have had in the county. The answer is some, but more would be good.

There were some very pertinent questions in that session. We agreed that was incumbent on us to do what we can to make new development of high quality; that, as Lord Salisbury said, is built right, looks right and acts right forever. As Mr Beazley noted, these issues can be toxic, so that underlines the importance of getting better at this.

In Session Two we explored in some detail key aspects of planning and design issues that growth must address. Perhaps unsurprisingly it was movement issues that really grabbed the most attention and some of the gaps in provision (east-west in particular) were explored. Again it seemed that symposium participants agreed that 'relocalising' made sense while also taking a strategic countywide view.

There was again an emphasis on enlightened design and some new instruments like local development orders, and design principles like the urban village model and the Transect got a mention.

After a well-deserved lunch break (the sausage rolls were especially acclaimed) we reconvened to look at how some of these issues are being faced in actually building a new settlement from scratch today in Scotland. Mr Paul Roberts, Lord Southesk and Lord Aboyne really enthralled us with their exploration of the evolution of the new town of Chapelton of Elsick, a process which seemed to Susan absolutely to have confounded the 'business as usual' naysayers.

This time it appeared that participants agreed that once Chapelton was well underway its developers and builders should get started on something similar in Hertfordshire: of course invoking Hertfordshire's own vernacular where rain is not such a constant. It was notable that while the design quality of this new town is exemplary it is also excellent in process terms: governance, financing and stewardship - and it was exceptionally kind of Lord Southesk and Lord Aboyne to travel all the way down from Scotland to tell us about the new town.

All of these sessions acted as a suitable grounding or framework for this final session where we took a good look at lessons from the past and challenges for the future in Hertfordshire itself. Mr John Lewis very modestly presented Letchworth's extraordinarily successful experience historically and in contemporary practice. It wasn't hard to draw the conclusion though that Letchworth remains an exemplar especially in financial and management terms. John's point about engaging people on shaping urban growth was particularly fascinating (and Dr Parham said she was not just saying that because she worked on the consultation process).

In our final panel some intriguing insights emerged about:

- What would be the appropriate scale or scales for development;
- A long term focus for investment;
- The need for a range of housing choices to match affordability and need;
- How a new Garden City might relate to other settlements;
- The need for neighbourhood planning 'from below';
- Robust, long-life loose-fit building types and retrofitting possibilities; and
- Funding for all this.

So where to next? Susan said it would be worth looking in detail through the *Herts Guide to Growth - Five Years On* research report. The authors think there are some useful research findings there and some tentative suggestions for the future especially in relation to the central role for good design and strategic and day to day management of growth. Susan explained that she would write up the notes taken on the day and bring together the excellent presentations and panel discussions into a symposium proceedings in the next couple of weeks. These would be distributed to everyone who attended and be available via a hyperlink on the Centre for Sustainable Communities website.

Finally Susan wanted to say thank you to all those who have made this possible, Lord Salisbury, Anthony Downs from Gascoyne Cecil, our wonderful speakers from both Scotland and closer to home, the terrific panel members and participants today, and of course the team from CSC who made the whole day run as seamlessly as it had. Most immediately, Susan asked participants to please stay for a glass of wine to help celebrate the launch of the Hertfordshire Guide to Growth - Five Years On, noting that given how patiently they had sat through quite a long and intense day, was richly deserved. The symposium's formal proceedings then closed with the publication launch and informal drinks.

Speaker Profiles

The Earl of Aboyne runs AJC Homes, an Aberdeenshire based house builder and building contractor, which is helping build the new town of Chapelton of Elsick. The company ethos focuses on quality and making every house they build a homely and functional abode, combining the best of traditional values with modern methods and sympathetic external architecture. Other projects they are currently involved in include Castlepark in Aboyne, where a wide range of granite-fronted house types with open plan, family orientated interiors are being built. The Earl runs the family distillery in the grounds of Aboyne Castle, producing the single malt whisky liqueur, Cock o' the North.

Mr Richard Beazley is the Chair of the Board of Governors of the University of Hertfordshire and is a member of the University Court. Richard was appointed as Vice Lord Lieutenant of Hertfordshire in 2010, is on the Advisory Council for the Hertfordshire Community Foundation, was Chairman of the East and North Herts NHS Hospital Trust for ten years from 2002, and is Vice Chairman of the Florence Nightingale Foundation. Previously Richard spent many years working in the international oil industry, as a lawyer, as an economist and as a chief executive; living in Oslo, Jakarta, Calgary, Toronto, New York, Washington and London, and travelling extensively elsewhere.

Mr John Boyd, BA (Hons) MRTPI, is the director of JB Planning Associates, a practice he founded in 2003, following a career in town planning that had included Local Government, planning consultancy, and the house building industry. The Practice advises a wide range of clients, including major house building and development companies, public sector organisations (including Local Government), businesses, and individual land and property owners.

Mr Matthew Bradbury is Director of Operations at the Land Trust, an independent Charitable Trust that manages open spaces on behalf of and in partnership with local communities. Matthew has substantial experience of planning, directing and managing major property acquisitions, and expertise in generating on site revenue streams. Matthew was previously Deputy Director and Head of Nature Reserves at the Norfolk Wildlife Trust where he was responsible for 4400 hectares of estates and six visitor centres including the award winning, carbon neutral Cley Marshes Visitor Centre.

Dr Tom Day is Head of Living Landscapes at the Herts and Middlesex Wildlife Trust. Tom is responsible for assisting the HMWT to deliver a number of strategic objectives including working with partners to restore resilient ecological networks by creating a rich and accessible Living Landscape throughout Hertfordshire and Middlesex.

Mr Anthony Downs is Director of Planning and Development at Gascoyne Cecil Estates and is responsible for a team overseeing all planning, new developments and building conservation. He comes from a background as a building surveyor and gained experience on a variety of projects prior to joining Gascoyne Cecil Estates in 2000. More recently Anthony has been deeply involved in work, which has evolved from the Old Hatfield Charrette, evolving new strategies for potential development in Hertfordshire and co-authored a recent entry to the Wolfson Economics Prize (which gained a special mention).

Ms Vanessa Gregory chairs Look! St Albans, which is running charrette processes to support a rich public realm, focusing on the betterment of St Albans. In times of austerity Vanessa sees this as an opportunity for councils, utility companies, the voluntary sector and others to work together pooling funds through integrated townscape management; to facilitate a growing quality public realm, easily maintainable, which offers better value for the money invested. Vanessa is an individual member of the Historic Towns Forum, the Prince's

Foundation for Building Community and Civic Voice.

Mr Adrian Hames is a Technical Director in WSP's Cambridge office and specialises in major transport projects across the UK. Adrian joined WSP in 2008, having gained previous project experience in both public and private sectors. Adrian's areas of expertise include Transport and Development Planning and Strategy and project management.

Mr James Hulme is co-writer of the Hertfordshire Guide to Growth – Five Years On research report and undertook much of the primary research and analysis to develop the document, as a research fellow at the Centre for Sustainable Communities. James works as Strategic Policy Adviser at the House Builders Association and was previously been the director of policy and research for the Prince's Foundation for Building Community.

Mr John Lewis has been the CEO of the Letchworth Garden City Heritage Foundation since 2010 and was previously Chief Executive of Milton Keynes Partnership. As an Associate Director with International property consultants DTZ John advised on a series of commercial and industrial developments in London and the Home Counties. His interest in the broader aspects of regeneration and housing developed when he joined English Partnerships where as a director he was responsible for the East of England Region. He is a Chartered Surveyor and has a Master of Arts in Urban Regeneration.

Dr Susan Parham is Head of Urbanism at the University of Hertfordshire's Centre for Sustainable Communities where she directed the research and co-wrote the Hertfordshire Guide to Growth – Five Years On research report. Susan has a long-term background in political economy, town planning and urbanism, with a focus on the placemaking of Garden Cities and New Towns. With Anthony Downs and Gavin Murray Susan co-authored a recent entry to the Wolfson Economics Prize on creating a new Garden City (which gained a special mention). Susan has run design charrettes in places as far afield as Norway and Transylvania. Her latest book, Food and Urbanism, is out with Bloomsbury in early 2015.

Mr Paul Roberts co-founded and is Executive Director of Turnberry Consulting, where he has led planning and development projects across the UK and US, including new towns; university masterplans; strategic sports facility redevelopments; retail and commercial schemes; and science and technology projects. Paul is a co-author of University Planning and Design: The Search for Perfection, is a Member of the Royal Town Planning Institute and the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors.

Prof Austin Smyth is Director of the Centre for Sustainable Communities at the University of Hertfordshire. He has held senior posts in transport consultancy and as Strategic Planning Advisor within the transport industry and was the first Chair in transport in Ireland at the University of Ulster in 1989. Austin has also held Professorships in Edinburgh and London and was Director General of the National Institute for Transport and Logistics, Dublin. Austin was Head of Transport Studies at the University of Westminster in 2006 and in 2010 he became a Commissioner to the Infrastructure Planning Commission. Austin is a Fellow of the Chartered Institute of Logistics and Transport.

The Earl of Southesk has set up the Elsick Development Company to promote the development of 634 hectares of land, owned by his father, the Duke of Fife, and a further 204 hectares owned by neighbouring farmers. The company's objective is to deliver the new town of Chapelton, ensuring that results are consistent with the town's masterplan. Chapelton will be a vibrant new community ten miles south of Aberdeen, adapting the best traditions of Scottish town design for modern living. The town plan has been developed by leading urban planners, architects and engineers, and is led by Elsick Development Company.