



Built Environment Committee

Corrected oral evidence: New Towns: Creating Communities

Tuesday 4 November 2025

10.45 am

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Members present: Lord Gascoigne (The Chair); Baroness Andrews; Lord Bailey of Paddington; Lord Cameron of Dillington; Viscount Hanworth; Baroness Janke; Lord Mawson; Baroness Miller of Chilthorne Domer; Lord Porter of Spalding; Baroness Warwick of Undercliffe; Viscount Younger of Leckie.

Evidence Session No. 1

Heard in Public

Questions 1 - 16

Witnesses

I: Paul Augarde, Director, Augarde & Partners; Daisy Narayanan MBE, Public Realm Director, the Crown Estate; Catherine Williams, Planning Director, Home Builders Federation (HBF).

USE OF THE TRANSCRIPT

1. This is a corrected transcript of evidence taken in public and webcast on www.parliamentlive.tv.

Examination of witnesses

Paul Augarde, Daisy Narayanan and Catherine Williams.

Q1 The Chair: Good morning. Welcome to the House of Lords and the Built Environment Select Committee. As everyone knows all too well now, we have finished our first report on new towns and are continuing to look into new towns by exploring how to make a successful community, what placemaking means and how to make it a reality on the ground for those who will live in the new towns. Today is our first public session and we are delighted to have three witnesses here with us today to talk us through their experiences and what this all means to them. Perhaps you could introduce yourselves first—starting with you, please, Catherine.

Catherine Williams: Good morning, everyone. I am the planning director for the Home Builders Federation. HBF is the representative body of the house-building industry in England and Wales, and our members are responsible for delivering 80% of all new private homes in England and Wales.

Daisy Narayanan: Good morning, everyone. Thank you so much for the opportunity to come here to present. It is a real privilege. I am the public director at the Crown Estate. At the Crown Estate, we have a remit to deliver in partnership thriving, inclusive, sustainable places that deliver long-term value for communities and the environment. Thank you.

Paul Augarde: Hello. I am director at Augarde & Partners. We are a place strategy consultancy working with public, private, and third sector clients across the UK, including in some old new towns as well as some potential new new towns. I am also co-founder of the Place Collective UK, which is a collective of place professionals across the UK—1,700 members—linked into the global placemaking network, which includes umbrella bodies such as Placemaking Europe and Placemaking X.

The Chair: Thank you very much for making the time for us today. As we have said before, we have a series of questions to go through. If you do not know the answer to a question or feel that it is best to answer in writing, please feel free to say so. Asking the first area of questions is myself and my colleague Baroness Warwick. Just for context, we will have Baroness Andrews zooming in on the TV screens and participating later.

Q2 We often hear the phrase “placemaking”. In the context of new towns, which is what we are looking at, what does placemaking mean to you, and have you seen it delivered successfully? Can you define what success would mean and whether actual success is a reality?

Catherine Williams: I am sure the others are probably far more expert than me on the definition of placemaking, but for me it is about creating places through involvement with communities and stakeholders. It is very much a public-private partnership in terms of its success and delivery. As for measuring success, quantitatively it can be measured through the number of businesses opening in commercial spaces, the number of

vacant commercial units in any mixed-use environment, and the dwell time in public spaces. Obviously, you can measure success by asking the people who live and spend time there.

Daisy Narayanan: Yes, I completely agree. I think, at its heart, placemaking is multi-layered. It is a people-centred approach to planning and design and the stewardship of places. When you put that into practice, for me placemaking seeks to build and improve public space. It should spark public discourse and create beauty and delight. It should engender civic pride, connect neighbourhoods and support community health and safety. When it is done well, it can catalyse economic development, promote environmental sustainability and, most importantly, nurture an authentic sense of place.

The great global urbanist Jan Gehl talks first about life, then spaces, then buildings, and the other way round never works. For me, success would be measured by how well people use spaces, how you value them and how you identify with the place, with a strong social life, walkability, co-evolving mutualism, and—like Catherine said—speaking to people to see how they use it.

Paul Augarde: It is not always easy, is it? We talk about placemaking a lot, and it is quite hard to hold on to sometimes, I find. Its lineage goes back to Jane Jacobs and William H White in the 1960s, picked up by the Project for Public Places in the 1980s and 1990s, predominantly in New York. Often then, it was around public realm and public spaces. Actually, it has evolved heavily since then to take in a much broader sense and a much broader number of aspects of place.

Often when I am asked, “What is placemaking?” I respond to the question by saying, “Think of a place that you know well, that you are connected to positively. Think of the elements of that place that are strong, which you feel are very positive, whether they be spatial or geographic or whether they be spiritual or economic or whatever”. Placemaking is essentially the tool by which we facilitate those elements but also ensure that those elements stick together.

The Chair: Thank you. I am going to hand over to Baroness Warwick. Before I do—you do not all need to answer this question—is there one great example of where this has been done successfully? It does not need to be in this country, but are there any? Come on, who will be a volunteer? I am not going to go for you, Catherine, do not worry. Paul.

Paul Augarde: Can I do one? To be fair, this one is quite close to one of the committee member’s hearts, but I worked for many years in Poplar in east London, and there was the St Paul’s Way transformation, led by Lord Mawson. The point of it was that it was a multiagency approach to place, bringing in strategic stakeholders, local authorities, housing associations, TfL, but also education, health, and the community itself. As for the elements of place that were changed, some of them were physical, some of them were new homes, some of them a new school, but there were also elements of it that were about improving or decreasing anti-social

behaviour, creating better flow-throughs and creating a more cohesive community through a range of interventions. What I like about it is it notes that placemaking is not this single physical element. It is about all these different elements and then about how they fit together to create the whole.

Q3 Baroness Warwick of Undercliffe: Good morning, and thank you so much for coming. I am intrigued because each of you, in responding to the question, gave quite a broad and rather amorphous response; it is difficult to write down how you pin this down. For us, that is quite a problem, because we are looking at very different places in very different areas with very different populations, yet they have to be people centred. You have to consult the local population, to be people led and to have an awful lot of characteristics.

Perhaps I could turn this around a little bit and ask could you be a bit more specific. When asked specifically about success measures, the ones you mentioned were practical but also rooted in buildings and spaces. I am just wondering, apart from just consulting people, do you have a better way of measuring success? One of our problems as a committee will be getting the Government to define better what success means in the new places they are setting up, and then how we hold them—and encourage others to be—accountable against a set of criteria that people will believe in. Could you approach it from that perspective? Paul, could you kick us off?

Paul Augarde: Yes, I am happy to. I will try to create something less amorphous, but I might struggle at times. Measurement of place impact and placemaking is much debated. What we can state is that it is long term and it is complicated. If we try to do short-term measurements and short-term monitoring, it is difficult. The monitoring must be tailored to the place. We can have a framework that can include things like demand, values, churn and investment appetite. At the same time it can include a sense of community, cohesion within that community and a sense of identity, but we must tailor those to the place in which we are building. As we know, the short list of new towns at the moment is quite diverse—they are quite different places.

To my mind, monitoring must include the people who are meant to be impacted by that change. If we simply have a set of measures and try to impose them on a place and then a population, a population that is necessarily, by definition, changing and growing, we will not understand really what success looks like. The qualitative and quantitative is key. Yes, we need to find our good datasets, but at the same time we need to talk to people and have that narrative flowing through into the monitoring.

I have an example around the short-term piece. The danger of measuring only the things that we feel we can deliver quickly means that quite often we end up with the tail wagging the dog. A developer partner may be with us for five years. We want them to deliver something that shows place impact within that time. Let us take the bench. We can see that the

bench has been delivered, and we know that the bench has positive aspects for health, connection to nature and social cohesion, so we can mark that. The trouble is that we will then insist on more benches because we can monitor them, and what we must do is the other way around. We must acknowledge that long-term place impact is difficult, and we need to sculpt it carefully over the long period.

Daisy Narayanan: Yes, I completely agree. To build on what Paul has just said, the assessment of what success looks like is both qualitative and quantitative. To your point about what specific tangible things can be measured, for me the key indicator—again, building on what Paul said—is social cohesion. You can measure the level of neighbour interaction. You can look at what community events there are, the perceived safety and accessibility, to what extent public spaces and amenities feel like they are accessible to everyone. You can measure biodiversity and the presence and quality of green infrastructure, wildlife habitats, ecological networks and, as Paul said, you can measure resident satisfaction.

As an example, in Scotland, the Government, Architecture and Design Scotland and the NHS together came up with tool, which is called the place standard tool, a framework that allows these conversations to happen in a way that you can get a baseline for what people think about a place, what the identity is—then you can keep measuring how people feel about their place.

To come to Paul's point, again I completely agree, it has to be long term. You cannot measure success in the short term. At the Crown Estate, we have the immense privilege of being stewards of the land and we can look ahead to the next 100 years. One of the things that having that long-term, vision-led approach allows us is that evaluation and monitoring of success. That then allows us to have ongoing investment and ongoing conversations with the community as things change.

Catherine Williams: All I would add is that the success of each place will depend on the place, if that makes any sense. As we have said, these places that have been identified in the shortlist are really diverse, and what is key to their success is the vision of the place in the first instance. You cannot define what success will look like until you understand what the original vision is. That will give you something that you can look back on over time to determine whether it has been successful in meeting its vision.

Baroness Warwick of Undercliffe: I have one final follow-up. With where we are now, we know where the new towns are likely to be, so this is a very specific question. In your view, looking at what the taskforce said and the Government's response to it so far, are they getting it right yet? Are they getting it right enough for you to feel confident?

Paul Augarde: Are you talking about the locations or the framework?

Baroness Warwick of Undercliffe: Not about the locations particularly—about whether each of them falls within that concept of

vision. Are there places where, when you read the report, you felt they could be developed and would have the opportunity for placemaking?

Paul Augarde: Yes. Setting that vision is one of the key parts of the approach. In the same way that governance needs to be tied on and needs to be a central part of that approach, the setting of the vision is key. All places have the possibility to grow and expand and be the best that they can be, absolutely, and the places on the shortlist, absolutely. However, the vision cannot be around 10,000 homes. That is not a place. It must be a place vision that says: what are the opportunities for the young people growing up here in 30 years? What does it mean to live in this place? Why would I visit this place? What is this place? That is the key element. In my mind, that has still to be defined. I have not seen any of that.

Daisy Narayanan: Yes. I completely agree.

Q4 **Baroness Janke:** Essentially, you are talking about places for people, which is the defining factor. How people live in a place is often determined by the quality of the architecture and the design of the places that they live in. What is your experience of getting quality architecture that reflects what people want and makes life accessible—makes people proud of where they live? Some of us have seen many developments that have been quite the opposite. I just wondered what your experience of that was.

Daisy Narayanan: For me, there is a fundamental human connection with our places and that includes where we live, where we work, the buildings that we go to and where we play. I think that the quality of what is built has to be an exemplar. The opportunity that we have with this work that the committee is leading is exactly that—it is to set those standards.

In my role at the Crown Estate, I look at the space between the buildings. Getting that right is fundamental and the key to success. You design for human scale, you design for people first, and your buildings, your streets and your open spaces should feel comfortable, should be easy to navigate for a person who is on foot. They should feel safe. Your pedestrian network should be with places that connect rather than isolate. That is the same for buildings as well, and how you design them. With the accessibility of your buildings, everyone, regardless of their background or ability should be able to use those spaces and feel welcome in them—placing ecology, nature and habitats at the core of it. Going back to the human perception of how we live and how we inhabit these places, spaces, and buildings has to be the core.

Baroness Janke: Is there any conflict in high-quality architecture, building and cost, for example? Is that one of the issues at all in successful placemaking?

Catherine Williams: These places have to be viable. You are talking about large-scale development that will be delivered by a number of

developers, so you need to make sure that any design guidance or policy is clear and provides a clear framework for developers to design to, but ultimately it needs to be commercially viable—so there is a balance. There is always a balance to be struck in development. While it might cost more, there is evidence to suggest that you reap the returns. Some RICS research was done back in 2016 that demonstrated that your sales revenues are higher if you invest in high-quality architecture, in large-scale developments and good quality placemaking. In short, yes, it might cost more but there are benefits to that.

Paul Augarde: Good design is fundamental to pride of place, and to sense of place in many ways. As we have said already, placemaking is a broad palette and there is a lot of placemaking that does not cost anything, which is about partnerships working together and creating a sense of agency and identity—all those elements. I would say that it can save money and boost values. Famously, King's Cross was not viable until they started to create some placemaking, some footfall, some visitor economy, and then it became viable. So, placemaking is a key part in creating viability.

The thing I would add on is that there is something that costs more, and that cost sometimes means ceding some power and some control, so bringing on community and bringing on partners and allowing them to do more. Giving away a bit is generally at the heart of good placemaking. Actually, that is sometimes the thing that people find hardest, rather than the cash.

The Chair: Great. We are going to move on to the next section, which is led by Baroness Andrews and Lord Porter.

Q5 **Baroness Andrews:** Good morning, everybody. It is very interesting to have such a spread of experience before us this morning, and I want to pursue this question of diversity of place. Not that I want you to comment individually on the locations, but do you think those locations were what you would have expected the Government to come up with, or were you surprised at the geographical spread as it worked out?

Catherine Williams: In terms of the geographical spread, no—but when we think about new towns I am sure that the majority of us would think about the post-war concept of a new town. With the locations that have been selected, obviously there is a range in the types of places and development, from regeneration to urban extensions and densification, and then what we would understand to be classic new towns. In my view, that has resulted in some confusion among the public—among both the public and professionals, actually. The majority of us, when we think about new towns, think about standalone new settlements, and whether the new town definition is always the right one is questionable.

Baroness Andrews: Paul and Daisy, do you agree with that? Was that your reaction?

Paul Augarde: Yes, I have to say the same. Geographically it was not surprising, but the range was somewhat surprising. On the question about new towns and what “new town” means especially to the public, what is a new town? Is it Basingstoke, Basildon, Harlow or Hemel Hempstead? Is it around extension? Understanding that is quite key, because there is an important point in people’s acceptance of this. If we look at some of the elements from the old new towns and how they were sold, that sense of a new Eden for many people, that is quite an exciting concept. We need to reimagine that for a city centre location or an edge of London extension or whatever.

Baroness Andrews: I will come back to that because I think that is an interesting point. What do you think, Daisy?

Daisy Narayanan: From my perspective, one of our joint ventures with Lendlease is one of the sites that have been selected. We are actually quite excited about it.

Baroness Andrews: Where is that? Can you tell us?

Daisy Narayanan: It is a Thamesmead project. We are excited about all this learning that we have from the mistakes that were made back in the day, and from the issues that we are facing now and some of the responses that we are talking about today in terms of placemaking: how do we put that into practice in Thamesmead? It is one of the few remaining undeveloped brownfield waterfront sites in London and the south-east, and it offers the scale, capacity and opportunity to accommodate the significant long-term economic growth we need. We are excited about taking all this learning and putting it into that project.

Baroness Andrews: That would be a specific outcome for us to watch. On what Paul and Catherine say about the confusion in people’s minds now that new towns do not always appear to be new, the placemaking principles you have been talking about should be fairly universal, no matter whether it is regeneration, extension or new talent—or am I wrong? Paul, do you want to pick that up?

Paul Augarde: You are right that the principles around community cohesion, accessibility, a level of enfranchisement or agency within the community, diversity of offer and opportunity, health, healthy places and access to nature, are the same wherever the location is. There are a few elements that are new. One is about identity, which I think is key.

Baroness Andrews: New in what sense?

Paul Augarde: I mean identity in terms of whether we are building a new town. Is this a new Eden for people? I have been doing some work in Basingstoke, and we have been interviewing first-generation residents whose move to Basingstoke, the new town, gave them a real sense that they were pioneers. They were moving from south-east London, from smaller houses, and they got jobs and cleaner skies and a place that would nurture their family. Are we selling those elements of place, which

some of the locations suggest we should? Others may about be densification of existing urban centres, and that is a different story. When we are creating those identities—and it is a bit like the vision—what are we trying to create with them and what is the narrative that we are putting together?

There is another important point about new town or town extensions, which is sometimes missed because there is a bit of a sugar rush sometimes with the new town concept, that we need to make sure that those new towns or those extensions especially add to the commercial and town centres that they are next to. Our town centres are struggling across the country. What we need these new towns or town extensions to do is add value back into those town centres and not to draw away and essentially give with one hand and take with the other.

Baroness Andrews: Does that not mean, though, that there will be different approaches to placemaking? In an urban extension where you will be dealing with a given population in a way that you are not in a greenfield site, where you have to visualise a community from scratch, will that be different and do different priorities apply?

Daisy Narayanan: Yes, you are completely right. Some placemaking principles have universal relevance, as Paul has just mentioned, but their application must always be rooted in local context, culture and landscape. For me, the identity of the place comes from its land, from the topography, the watershed, the local geology, and from its people, from the stories they tell and the experiences they have. How do you harness that? I believe passionately about co-creating with communities. As you said, there will be places where the community is yet to arrive, so how do we make sure that the right people are there in the room? Who is not there? What are the diverse voices that need to be there to make sure that those communities, whether they are there already or future communities, can be nurtured and thrive?

Baroness Andrews: Yes. It is very hard to imagine when you cannot see a population in situ. How are you going to find them and how are you going to access the stories, and how is that going to become how they make the place? What I am trying to work out with the committee is whether these are standard approaches or whether, given this diversity, changes of topography, changes of location near work, near previous communities or whatever, they will be able to be universalised, or whether each place will have to be treated differently to get the best out of it.

Catherine Williams: I do not think that the approach should be that they should be universalised. I am concerned that we are looking for this top-down approach of setting standards from a central place when all these locations are incredibly different, in their geography but also in the type of development. What is important is that they are treated like individual proposals and individual sites, and the approach may well be completely unique from one to the other. I am sure there will be similarities when you look at the standalone settlements, and there might

be some similarities in approach when you look at the regeneration elements, but I do not think you can impose a set of standards and a set of principles on these areas. What is key is that you invest in locations as individual locations, whether it is a development corporation or another delivery vehicle, so that they are resourced effectively with the right skilled professionals who look at how best to approach each of the individual settlements.

Baroness Andrews: I would like the other two witnesses to comment on that. You have been suggesting that there are some universal principles for good placemaking, and that may not be a binary choice. You can have individual identities and places to the best of what they can produce and some universal set of placemaking principles. Is that more or less where you are coming from?

Paul Augarde: Yes. I believe you can set out good placemaking principles to take forward—that is fine—and some of them can be specific to new town extensions or large-scale development. I think that is valid. Other than that, it is about the approach, and you can have a template approach but it is about applying that to the individual places.

As Catherine said, it is important to have strong governance. It has been mentioned in the report as it stands. It is important to have that public-private multi-sector governance, which includes the community as well, and setting a course, which I talked about earlier, around vision and making sure that we know where we are headed, that 30-year piece. Something that we work on quite a lot is how these places will take 30 years to build at least so this is not a light-switch moment. There is not all at once a new town—there are 30 years of people living and being born and growing up in places, and the process itself is part of the new town. It is part of place, and we need to understand what placemaking in that specific place looks like in three years, 10 years, 20 years and 30 years. We have a sense of what we sometimes call a place journey, a sense of where the place has been, where it is and where it moves to. I think that this is a universal approach that you can apply, but it does not determine what that looks like for the different places.

Baroness Andrews: Thank you very much, Paul.

Lord Porter of Spalding: Because we do not trust the public to read our declarations of interest for some reason—I do not understand why—I now have to go through my declarations of interest once, because we only do not trust them once. For future meetings, we will trust them to look at what is on the written record. It is a very odd way of working but, for the record, I am a non-exec director of Norse Group. It does varied services, but one of them is a drafting team for place design. I am a non-exec director of Rentplus Homes, which is a private, equity-based affordable housing delivery unit. I am a director and beneficial owner of Porter and Verrells, which does one-off bespoke building, although in the absence of being able to find decent building plots it does not do much in that way at the moment.

I am a strategic adviser—I will have to read this now—and non-executive director of Elixir Earth, a place-based regeneration, finance, tech and digital twinning business. I am strategic adviser to Prodo, a tech-based tenant management team, and obviously these properties will have tenants in some of them. I am also a strategic adviser to Officio, a procurement business—I am sure somewhere along the line people will be buying the stuff that goes into these places. I am a strategic adviser to Inspire Solutions, which does specific client-based affordable homes using private equity. For the benefit of the record that is it.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Q6 Lord Porter of Spalding: If somebody can find something else that is on the list that I should have read out, I am sorry that I missed it.

Catherine said earlier that were striving to get a top-down version of what a place-based approach is, but we are not—we definitely do not want that. It was pleasing to hear your earlier remarks about the fact that this is not really about new towns. A little bit of it is about new towns, but the rest of it is urban extension or regen projects, and they are all completely different. So having one place-based approach would be extremely difficult.

Clearly, when it comes to a new town, somebody has to put a lot of investment in up front to do some of the physical infrastructure necessary for good placemaking—boring things like shops. Who wants to open up a shop when there are no customers? Somebody will have to, or else you will end up with customers and no shops. Somebody will have to invest in that, so clearly there is a type of placemaking that would be required in a new town. For an urban extension, fine, there are already customers around, and some of the infrastructure that is necessary will already be there and will just need to be expanded, so it is probably an easier place to invest in.

We definitely do not want one version that fits all. We are happy that you have said what we thought, which is that “new town” is a misnomer for a lot of this—it is just odd, when it is just about urban extensions. The development industry would have done that anyway; we do not need to create a fanfare around it. The real test for some of us is whether the Treasury is serious about this and the Government are serious about it. We will see what happens when Rachel looks down the back of the magic sofa to see if there is any money to pay for some of the stuff that is necessary to make this work.

One of the things you said earlier, which I am going to disagree with, is that it is people-centric and we need to ask the people. We cannot ask the people because new towns do not have anybody in them to ask—there are only those in the nearest settlement, who I can guarantee will not want it. You cannot ask them what they want because they will say, “greenfield”. With an urban extension, people who live in the existing settlement will not want the new settlement to be better than the bit they live in because they are not going to want to live in the cheap houses

that are already there compared with the really nice ones, where somebody bothered about how people live when they built them. How do we recommend to the Government how to wrestle with those competing interests and try to give them not a template for everywhere but some common-sense approaches? How do we say, "You need to incorporate this in a new town or in an urban extension to make it truly successful"? You answered most of that stuff. I am only asking it again now because I am supposed to ask something. This is not my agenda, this place-based stuff.

Paul Augarde: There is a question in there, essentially: why do people not want large-scale new build near them? If that is what you are talking about, I do not think that the schemes are the issue. The process is often the issue, and the fact that the process often does not start with the people who are living there. I appreciate that small settlements are difficult, with 500 people living in a place. However, we are changing the lives of those 500 people, and then the story starts in the wider area by talking to people.

Often we do development backwards, whether it be a single block or a large-scale regeneration. Often we talk about the number of homes, their heights and densities, then we work down through tenure and at some point get to the ground floor—and it is an afterthought, what goes on the ground floor and what happens in the public realm, yet the vast majority of people experience that place from the ground floor and the public realm. That is where their kids play, that is where they engage with people, yet that is the last thing we think of.

There is something here about how we think about larger-scale regeneration. We are doing a similar thing: we are talking about large numbers of jobs, infrastructure and all the rest of it, which is important, but it feels like the last thing we talk about is the place that people experience. It is about creating narratives early on, creating stories, talking to people and building a story that will not always take everyone with them, especially a large settlement that is essentially expanding on a very small settlement already. However, I think that is the best way to start building a story that takes as many people with you as possible.

Daisy Narayanan: To build on what Paul said there, I agree. I think that you have to make sure that the social infrastructure is in there first. You cannot build houses and leave it there. Everybody acknowledges that, and that is how we are working now. It is about how people experience the place in those stories, what is it that we are trying to achieve, the co-creation of that vision that needs to happen at the very start, then going back, testing and monitoring to see if that is where we are actually going together. My mantra is constantly: collaboration, collaboration, collaboration. You have to make this happen together. Not one developer or one local authority or government can do this. It has to be done across sectors, multi-sector, with an interdisciplinary approach to place.

Catherine Williams: If you have a new settlement being proposed, people will not live there already. However, people in the area should be

invested in what that place is because they will experience it in some way or another, particularly settlements of the scale that we are talking about. It is not about whether they think it should happen or not but what they want to see there. We all have the experience of standing at public consultations and it not being particularly enjoyable—but it is about trying to ascertain what people want in terms of shops, services, infrastructure, walkability, buses, rapid transport and things like that, and trying to elicit that when they engage with the place, when it eventually happens, what will make it a better place.

You mentioned shops. People want shops to be open, and a lot of the criticism aimed at the development industry is about infrastructure not coming forward early enough. You can address a lot of that criticism by looking at the funding and ensuring that there are shops that are, in some way, commercial spaces and that there is some incentive for them to open before the critical mass of people is there. It is also about making sure that there is the right public-private partnership in terms of schools being open at the right time, health services being provided, bus services, and so on.

The new towns programme provides a unique opportunity to ensure that all the voices, such as stakeholders, are in the right place at the right time, that you do not have a normal planning application that slows some things down, and that the NHS, the education authority, fire, police, highways and everybody else should be invested to make sure that things happen at the right time.

Paul Augarde: It is about mapping that timing. Take Brent Cross, which put a lot of the place-based elements in early and worked with the community to use those so that the existing community felt they had some agency over it, felt there was a reason for this growth and that they were part of it in some sense. Then, when the new flats were built and people were moving in, they were using that as well. There are good examples of doing it right. Getting the timings right and getting the cashflow right is difficult, but there is a real need to map the journey to the vision.

Daisy Narayanan: Sometimes it is the small things that matter as well. To pick up on the point about consultation, someone once said to me, "Start with the petunias". Start by planting some flowers, planting trees. That starts the conversation going, so small things matter at the very start.

Lord Porter of Spalding: Following on from some of that, again, that becomes an easier proposition in an urban extension than it does in a new town proper. In Stevenage, a new town that I grew up in, it was relatively easy for people to play with because basically we were picking this population up from east London and moving it into a field somewhere in a place called Hertfordshire. We knew what that was when we were in London. There was a community that was expected to move to it that could be consulted.

As far as I am aware, the Government are not putting a proposition on the table that says, "We will decant a load of people from somewhere", where we could go and ask them what they wanted in the new place. That makes new towns difficult. I appreciate the fact that you have said the state needs to corral all the players—the health service, the fire service and all those people—and this is a unique time to be able to do it, because you cannot do it on any other development. As the leader of a council, my planning team commissioned doctors' surgeries to be put in in most urban extensions we were building. However, I could not, for love nor money, persuade the health service to put GPs in the buildings. It is always preferable to have the people who will staff a building brought to the table before you actually build the building.

Paul Augarde: In all large-scale regeneration, you will get that process. You start engaging with one community and then you are building out that scheme and a new community is coming in at the same time. It is about integrating those people; it is a flexible approach, so you start getting your community that you then build from—but I take your point. If it is a field in the middle of nowhere, the starting point is more complex, but it is the same system.

Q7 Lord Bailey of Paddington: Good morning and thank you. Some of the questions we were going to ask have been answered, but I have a couple of things I want to pick up from what you said. Everybody seems to be in favour of consultation and consulting everyone. My experience of government means the wider you consult, the less you get done. Also, who is expected to pay for the consultation costs? That is one question I put to you.

On the other question—and why I differ from Gary [Lord Porter] —I believe you can build a community that does not yet exist. If you are going to build a new town or urban extension, if you know what you are going to put there, you then look for the profile of people. For instance, I have two children. I need to house those children. If you had spoken to me 20 years ago, I did not have two children. I would have preferred a flat without a garden. Now I would kill for a garden. My point is that you can look at a space, decide what will be on that space, then search people out. I think that modern people are more amenable to that.

One of the biggest challenges we have—and I would like a comment from you—is that communities are nowhere near as cohesive as they used to be. Now you can find a community, but what it tends to want to do is keep other communities out of its community. How do you address that? I know in a lovely middle-class world you believe everybody wants to be together, but it simply is not true. So how do we consult and inform people that you cannot just bring your family, you will have to live with other people as well?

My last question, the one I am meant to ask, is: many housing developments are hated by the people around them, but why is that? I personally think that people hate housing until it is there. Then, once it is there, everybody forgets that it has not always been there. The people

are opposed to change rather than opposed to housing. What can be done to make that process less painful for the people who are already there?

Again, I think slightly differently from Gary—I think that building in the middle of a field is easy. You just build in the middle of a field and tell everybody, “This is what it will be like”, and they will come there with fewer expectations. When you add to someone’s environment, they have some very big expectations. I go back to my point: why do people hate modern housing so much? You hear more about people opposing housing than you do about them supporting housing, and I would like an example of both, someone loving it and someone hating it. I will start with Catherine.

Catherine Williams: In terms of why people hate it, I think that the public perception is that people hate it, whereas the most recent survey results show that 94% of people who actually live in the developments would recommend their development to a friend, which is a really high number. It is the highest that that has been for 20 years. You also have to think about the type of person who says that they do not like the development. These are the people who shout the loudest. If you are agnostic about whether the development happens or not, you are probably not going to say anything at all. Therefore, all you hear are the loud voices who say they do not like it. They are also the people, more often than not, who have the time to spend on saying that they do not like it—so it is a certain demographic of people, probably not the people who need a house. It is the people who have their house already, who are probably not looking at moving, and they have the time to say that they do not like it.

We need to look at different ways of engaging with people. This is done more and more now on smaller developments, but just because there is no community there, there is still a community that will be closest to some of these locations. Tempsford in Bedfordshire is not an island—it is still close to other locations. Those people who are close by still have a right to be engaged and have an input into what the new settlement is like.

With new technologies, apps and QR codes for example—which I am sure you two use far more than I do now—you can engage people far more easily than by asking them to come down to a village hall and fill in a form. You might then get a more diverse range of people who engage, because you are not asking them to give up their time at a specific time on a specific day. You may well also get a different response because, again, they can do it on their own, they can respond on their own. They can view it on a website—they are not perhaps being influenced by the loudest voices in the room telling them what a disaster it is and how bad it will be for the rest of the population.

In terms of the cost of consultation, I imagine that that will be done by the developers and promoters of the new settlements. In the case of existing settlements, in Plymouth, for example, the city council will have

to bear some of the cost of that, because they are one of the promoters and landowners of the area that is being consulted on. With people hating development, it is something that we obviously need to make every effort to change, but I do not think that the number of people everybody thinks hate development hate development.

Daisy Narayanan: I will pick up the positives on that. When a space feels well designed, many people comment on how comfortable it is or how easy it is to navigate, how much they enjoy the light and how safe it feels. The issue is that these are all intuitive reactions to design, whether good or bad. I do not think that people understand the systemic choices and design decisions that have to go into creating these places. There is something about closing the gap between how people experience their places and the systems, about understanding the systems and choices behind that and explaining that to people.

Your comment about consultation is fair. As Catherine said, we have all been at the front end of that. Consultation needs to be engagement; it needs to go beyond the transactional to become truly embedded as part of the process. When done right, I think that consultation engagement is game-changing for how you deliver a project. I grew up India, I have grown up in Asia, and I have had the good fortune to live and work in the US and over here. I find it an immense privilege to be able to comment and shape the vision of the place where I have grown up. Things happen around you, buildings come up and roads get built without any input from us as citizens. When you talk about a shared vision with the community, I just feel that there is power in that when it is done well, when it goes beyond the transactional to something that is about that shared vision.

Lord Bailey of Paddington: Paul, can you add to your comments something about social infrastructure? I come from a very poor community, but we have a very strong identity. I am not sure how you develop that. It is not our library that makes us feel like we are from a particular place—it is other things that went on. Is there a process that you just have to leave to chance, or is there something you can deliberately do about that?

Paul Augarde: I want to tackle the consultation bit head on to start with, because consultation that is done wrongly or late—delivering a master plan and then telling people to respond to it—does not create the buy-in that you need to get positivity. Engagement done well and early not only creates agency in the process but builds capacity within the people you are engaging, because you need stewards long term, you need someone to continue this once all the hard hats have gone and you need someone to continue that stewardship moving forward. Apart from anything else, building the agency through your engagement makes good business sense and makes sure people are part of it, so you get less reaction and less pushback.

On the question about people living right next to the development, the issue quite often is that when we draw the red line, we talk to everyone within the red line but then we do not talk to people outside the red line.

The people outside the red line have as much of a story that they want as part of this. If you tell them they are building a high-end supermarket, which shall not be named, they will be happy. When they then find it is not the high-end one and it is the other one, they will not be so happy. There is a bit of their story there that they want to have as part of their place. Their place reflects them. It is about making that engagement really good, really early and quite broad.

On your point about cohesion, I was going to answer with social infrastructure. If we are essentially creating mixed communities—which is what we are doing; I think that it is 40% minimum affordability and half of that is social—we therefore need the infrastructure that brings those communities together. So I think that social infrastructure is absolutely important.

The point, though, is that the social infrastructure does not always have to look and sound like that bit of community space. It can look like a pub, a square or a civic structure that people join, and so social infrastructure is vital to making this work. It is not always about delivering it top down: here is your library; come to the library; read your books. Instead, it is about creating the space and the opportunity for people to do things, to come together, to start their own clubs and to bump into each other. All that is vital to making that cohesion bit work.

Q8 Lord Mawson: Paul, you are describing a far more complex picture of what this is all about than the tick-box culture you, and I suspect many of us, have had to live within for too many years.

A question for you: developers are often blamed for poor quality placemaking, but I suspect many of you, like me, have got on the inside of developers and their business models and got to know them, and you discover that it is rather more complex than any of that. One of the challenges that you face when you are trying to do the things you are describing is the fitness for purpose of the machinery of the state to do anything new, innovate and learn lessons. We often hear in this place, "Lessons will be learned". Nowadays, I do not believe it one minute because lessons are not being learned.

Could you say something about that? Because you shared some of the 28-year journey of Poplar HARCA with our attempts to bring together housing, health, education and people, in a very challenging set of housing estates in Poplar. You will know that, still today, the housing regulator, the audit office and others are constantly undermining and preventing the very innovations we need to happen at place with real people. It is still a difficult thing to do. Could say something about that? Otherwise, I worry that, in this place, we all drop into this simplistic ideology, which is: developers bad; public sector and housing associations good. I suspect that the real world is rather more complicated.

Paul Augarde: Do you want to start with builders?

Catherine Williams: Yes, with builders. Yes, I agree. I think that the development industry is the one that is blamed. That is because, in part, the system is so complex for a normal member of the public to understand that it takes a number of different parties to deliver on a mixed-use scheme, and so it is easier just to blame the named developer. As I said earlier, these new towns provide a unique opportunity for the various stakeholders to be brought together and made to make investment decisions and programme decisions based on these new or regenerated settlements. The planning system, as it stands, does not work effectively in doing that. That is why these locations and new settlements need to be considered outside of the traditional planning system. We need to identify who we need at the table at the same time as the very initial concepts are coming together.

Further work is being undertaken at the moment now that the 12 locations have been identified. We need the water companies, National Grid, district councils, education authorities, highways authorities and National Highways all to be at the table when these proposals are coming, because otherwise you will fail at the first hurdle when it comes to what infrastructure is necessary. You will end up with phases of housing coming forward, with nothing else. Who will be blamed? The development industry. We need a clear framework of expectations of who will be there, and they need to be held accountable to what they say is necessary. They need to work to what is probably a private-sector timetable. What we cannot have is the necessary stakeholders saying, "I will come back to you in six months' time when we have had time to review X, Y and Z", because otherwise you will have the private sector racing ahead and it will not happen all at the same time.

Daisy Narayanan: I agree completely with you, Catherine. There is something about the opportunity that we have now to embed that joined-up, integrated approach—the systems approach that we all talk about—and to be innovative. There will be different ways of doing things. At the Crown Estate, we are keen to make sure that we are responsible stewards of the land that we look after. In East Hemel we have, as an example, one of our flagship developments, part of the Hemel Garden Communities, which is building 11,000 homes. We are looking at delivering a country park and connected green corridors, integrating natural habitats and a public realm at the outset that supports health and well-being and climate resilience. We are genuinely looking at a different way of approaching traditional housing developments, by putting nature and people first, through a nature/people-led approach. There is an impetus on us all as we face these shared challenges of coming together and having that joined-up approach in order to do something different. This gives us an opportunity to do that.

Paul Augarde: I agree with all of that. I do not think that I know of a successful place that has been created without the public, private and third sector working together. We need not just to acknowledge that but to understand when different agencies and partners are there and for how long. Often, a developer will be there for a shorter time: they will be

there for a finite amount of time, they will build, they will sell and they will move on. We need to understand that and not expect that all impact from that scheme, for instance, is delivered within the five years of the build. We need to understand their position in the wider piece.

Maybe what is better is not them having to create immediate impact themselves but asking them to build the facilities that allow us to do that, or the arc that allows the community to then deliver long-term impact. It is about bringing everyone together while also understanding where their timings are and what they can reasonably impact. This is not about holding them to certain standards. This goes back to my earlier point about the bench: we revert to the bench because they can deliver that within the next five years—asking, “Have they delivered the bench or have they tried to get out of delivering the bench?”—rather than thinking that what we want is this bit of infrastructure or this piece of civic investment from them. So it is about understanding people’s roles within it.

Lord Mawson: Can you say a bit more about the fitness for purpose of the machinery of the state? Some of us worry that, as this Government get more into housebuilding, if they get there, we will repeat all the mistakes of the 1960s and 1970s, unintentionally not intentionally, because the machinery is not fit for purpose and lessons are not being learned on this machinery. That is a really serious issue.

Paul Augarde: This is about governance. There needs to be that sense of governance starting early and continuing, and not just continuing until most of the units are built. This is about a place-ownership piece. Reflecting back on Basingstoke, for instance, that early prospectus was fulfilled but it is no longer fulfilled. There was no point when someone held on to that stewardship and took it forward. The machine does not have the right governance to deliver, at this scale, these large-scale schemes.

Lord Mawson: I will make one final point about something that concerns me at the moment with this Government. I was talking to a Labour Party member yesterday, who is a senior doctor who has been involved in a lot of these questions about placemaking in his career. He was worried that this Government seem to think that the state alone can enable this stuff to happen. In contrast, what you are saying, Paul—and I agree with you—is that it needs the social sector, the public sector and the business sector to come together in dynamic partnerships to do this stuff. The state on its own is incapable of doing what you are talking about. Is that fair?

Paul Augarde: I would go further to say that that applies to any part of that. The private sector on its own does not have the longevity to do so. The third sector on its own does not have the capacity to do so. Yet they are all fundamental to the places working.

Lord Bailey of Paddington: To declare my interests, I am chairman of Faraday Ventures, which is a small developer set up to build social

housing and key-worker housing. Excuse me, Chair, I forgot to say it earlier. I was so excited to follow everyone that I forgot to do it myself.

Lord Mawson: Shall I just declare my interests? My interests are Morgan Sindall, Barratt Redrow, Kier, the NHS, HLM Architects, and various local authorities across the country.

The Chair: Thank you for that. We are moving on to viability now with Lord Cameron and Viscount Younger.

Q9 **Lord Cameron of Dillington:** Thank you very much for coming to spread your words of wisdom among us. I have interests to declare. I have farming and landowning interests in my family, albeit now from the perspective of a retired farmer.

I want to talk about the dichotomy between placemaking and viability. Does good placemaking have to cost a lot? Can it be done on the sly without the money having to be there? I worry mostly about those areas where, for instance, new towns will be built in areas where the market price of the houses may not be sufficient to give a margin for what some people might call the development corporation's spend on ancillary works, which we around the table think are vital works. Do you have any good examples of where placemaking has not cost a lot or those that maybe pay for themselves through the value they add in some form or other? Do the Government have to step in in certain circumstances where the uplift in value is inadequate to provide for that? Can you cover this particular problem? Maybe, Catherine, it is an HBF problem that you would probably be best to kick off with.

Catherine Williams: I do not have examples; I will leave that to the others. On it costing a lot, I said earlier that there might be additional costs in some of the architecture elements that might differ from a standard house type of a largescale builder. That can potentially be recouped in additional sales revenue. In terms of the placemaking, I do not think that it necessarily has to cost more. What we need to look at is, again, that it needs to be a public-private partnership in order for those things to be delivered at a time that will make a meaningful difference. If you rely on the private sector, it needs a critical mass of sales to fund the placemaking elements. You want the placemaking elements to be there early on in the process. There needs to be investment also from the public sector, whether that is paid back by the private sector, so that you can make a good-quality place while you are still selling the early houses. By doing that, you will get enhanced sales revenues. It balances that out.

Lord Cameron of Dillington: You said that it does not necessarily cost more, but the land is sold to the developer per acre, and if you have more acres being green space rather than houses, that is surely a cost.

Catherine Williams: Yes, but now I do not think that developers work on the basis of it all being houses anymore anyway, because even on small-scale developments you still have open space, sustainable urban

drainage and biodiversity net gain. You will never bank on there being 100% development areas.

Daisy Narayanan: To add to what Catherine said, high-quality placemaking does not need to be expensive. There will be certain up-front costs for sure—if you are talking about extensive landscaping, public art or other things that bring joy to people in their places—but most placemaking interventions can be cost effective and cost saving in the long run.

For example, designing streets for walking and cycling reduces the infrastructure and maintenance costs over time. If you are talking about green roofs and sustainable drainage systems, they benefit through lower energy and maintenance costs over time. Community-led initiatives can mobilise local resources and stewardship and reduce reliance on top-down investment for that. Well-designed places, as we have seen, tend to retain value, attract investment and reduce the social costs associated with isolation or poor health.

While good placemaking does not need to be costly, it requires commitment and co-ordination from across sectors, agencies and communities. Good placemaking, rather than being about more money, is about more time and more collaboration, as we have talked about.

Paul Augarde: I back up all that. There are good examples. I mentioned King's Cross earlier, which was non-viable to start with, did a range of placemaking and became viable. There is a genuine uplift, not just on sales but in terms of place perception. Place perception can be changed and can be influenced by a range of different elements. It can be public art. I have done projects in east London where I have worked with other partners. I have got the V&A to open a very small museum in the middle of Poplar, and it shifted the idea of what the place was. There is a load of partnerships that one can build with cultural organisations and the community, where you are building those things at low or no cost at all, but you are changing the perception, which is fundamentally what viability is about, as well as the infrastructure bit.

Lord Cameron of Dillington: It is quite true. I have been involved in various projects in rural areas where getting English Heritage to invest in a town centre has completely transformed the perception of the time, wealth and money coming in.

Paul Augarde: Absolutely. Then there is investment and that begets other things—but there has to be a start.

Q10 **Viscount Younger of Leckie:** To follow on from Lord Cameron, I have a couple of questions. It has been a very interesting session so far. I have picked up various themes. First, Catherine, you were talking about the importance of the link to businesses, and I will come back to that because we have not talked much about that today. You also talked about, as Paul and others have, the importance of private-public partnerships. Paul, you said something very interesting at the beginning,

which is that for placemaking you need to think about those elements that are strong and those elements that are interrelated. You talked about the question of a place, which is interesting.

My questions are along the lines of viability. Viability can be defined, as I see it, in two ways. One is, of course, to do with financial viability: what the return on your investment is over what particular period of time. Secondly, it could, particularly in this context, be defined in terms of the longevity of new towns. That was touched upon by Daisy in particular. That is to do with the design of houses and the products that are used for building houses. There is no point if the windows start breaking down after 20 years, or, in relation to the environment, if the trees start dying in 30 years. These are important points that you have made.

Following on from Lord Cameron, I have two questions. In terms of viability, can we break down the development of new towns into essentials? What are essentials and what are desirables? That is perhaps linked to the question of the shortage of funds. There is a utopia whereby new towns should have proper space, quality houses, enough green spaces and be climate change friendly. It is almost impossible to get all that in one box. That is the subject of one question: essentials versus desirables.

My final question is directed to Daisy. I was very interested to read about your background in Edinburgh and the City of Edinburgh Council. Were you involved in the development of the tram system? It had a halting start, I think, but they are all running well and I have used them in the past. As a key point here in terms of viability, Edinburgh is not a new town but there are new towns out at Ingliston and Livingston. You have made the link with the trams in Leith. To what extent did you do some modelling of return and investment in the use of the tram, and over what period of time? What lessons can we learn from that? Before that, to allow Daisy to think, perhaps Catherine can comment on the essentials and desirables.

Catherine Williams: Ultimately, the new towns that have been proposed are, in the majority, being promoted by the private sector. As such, they have to be financially viable, otherwise they will not happen. That is something that has the potential to be forgotten when the new towns concept is being talked about, because there is a lot of impetus to get these developments off the ground. There is commitment that they will have spades in the ground on three of them in this Parliament, but ultimately they will not come forward if the developers promoting and in the main delivering it are not financially viable. That will probably not help the development industry image where it is seen that it is their fault if things do not come forward. It needs to be separated, but it also cannot be forgotten that financial viability is essential.

In terms of the other essential elements, I know you said that some of the ancillary—or what other people think are ancillary—uses are in fact vital, and I agree. In that regard, they cannot be considered as optional. It is not just about the houses or about 10,000 or 20,000 new homes; it

is about social infrastructure. Without that, the houses will not sell anyway and that then links back to financial viability. In my view, the ancillary uses are not optional; they are equally vital, because they are then integral to the financial viability.

Viscount Younger of Leckie: Before we move on to Paul, may I ask again about businesses? Should the businesses be there in the first place before the new towns are built, or vice versa?

Catherine Williams: I do not think that they are separate to the new towns; they are all integrated. That includes the employment and commercial elements of the new towns. This is not just about residential use: they are new places; they are not residential schemes.

Paul Augarde: That is something that I was going to pick up. Most of those on the list are being promoted with an economic narrative that goes along with them, which is powerful and important. Outside the quorum of infrastructure—utilities and transport—I completely agree that social infrastructure is paramount. We can think about it differently, though, in that we do not have to mimic a 1960s environment of building the community centre, the pub, the butcher, the baker and the candlestick maker. We can integrate those. For instance, Bromley-by-Bow is a community centre that has artist studios and a health centre, and it is also a public realm. We have to think differently about those things, if we are to hold on to that viability.

The other thing is—this is a reiteration of something I have said before—is that, within the question of viability, we should also think about the importance of what these places do to the places next to them. Following the same point about the town centres, viability should include the idea that, if this is a town extension, then that town extension will reinvigorate the town centre and therefore will add economic uplift as well. We need to understand these places in terms of the places that they are next to, as well as the places they land in.

Daisy Narayanan: Thank you for the question about Edinburgh trams; it has been part of my life for many years. I am incredibly proud of what the city achieved with the second phase of the tram delivery. There are lessons about collaboration, leadership, bringing the community together and having robust discussions with a very strong vision. When I was with the City of Edinburgh Council, there was no secret that the initial phase of the trams project was troubled. The initial vision was a network that went north, south, east and west, and what was delivered in the first phase was a small section from the airport to the city centre.

The lesson that we learned from that was the case for change needing to be vital. We asked why that was necessary, and we made that point very clear. When we come to big regeneration schemes, such as those we have talked about this morning, the “why” is vital when you have those conversations with the community. On the governance point that Paul mentioned, it is critical to get that governance right. Success begets success. It was not easy, but the second phase was delivered to budget

on time, which has now allowed the city to look at the next extension for north-south. It is more expensive, but the conversation has become that much easier because there has been the delivery of a project that has been complicated but successful.

The Chair: Thank you very much. The final questions are led by Baroness Miller and Viscount Hanworth.

Q11 **Baroness Miller of Chilthorne Domer:** Thank you very much. It has been interesting so far. I have one interest to declare: I have some shares in a construction firm, Bradfords and Sons, which has a network of outlets throughout the south-west of England.

I will go back to Viscount Younger's list of essentials and desirables, looking at it from the point of view of what the Government should do when setting policies for this, considering how diverse—as you said earlier—the number of locations are. How prescriptive should they be in policies? I am struggling with the concepts of a template, a policy and a tool for getting to the placemaking. Perhaps if I gave you a couple of examples, you could see where my confusion or thinking lies. I would also include undesirables in this, because one of the most undesirable things in placemaking is the school run. It creates mayhem in a place, and if I were designing a policy for a new town, it would be to place the school somewhere where there was never a question of parents jumping into cars and taking their kids to school.

Daisy also mentioned the small things, which I do think is important, so could you say where some of those small things would fit in, without them being too prescriptive? I am thinking of things such as dog mess bins, so that the streets are not full of dog mess; dropped curbs, so that people with pushchairs or mobility scooters are not permanently disadvantaged; and benches for people to sit on. Obviously, we do not want a Government being that prescriptive, but how do you start to include the essentials and exclude the undesirables? How will the Government approach this policy-making?

Daisy Narayanan: Thank you for your question. There is something about the big vision and the approach to setting that vision that comes from the deep-rooted collaboration across sectors and disciplines that we have talked about today. Part of that is working with the communities, community groups, networks and the community champions that already exist, in order to understand what the desirables and undesirables are and to understand what the community wants for its vision.

In Edinburgh, for example, I mentioned the place standard tool; it allows community groups to come together to set the small things that they would like at the very outset of the place's journey. How can the people who live there be given the choice of not being dependent on a car to go to the shops or to schools? How do we ensure that everything is within walking distance—a place of close proximities, as they call it? How do you design those? Then the small things, which create the bigger steps that

lead to that vision, come with governance. How do these smaller conversations then feed into the wider masterplan and the wider vision?

Baroness Miller of Chilthorne Domer: In your world, there is no room for the Government to set out any of this?

Daisy Narayanan: I think that the policy-making sits within the questions of how you approach your masterplan and your vision setting. As the report has set out, there are certain policies that already exist that you could work within.

Catherine Williams: We cannot forget that there will be a planning framework around these places. In the traditional sense, if you were looking at a development, you would look to your local plan—your development plan—and, under the new system, there will also be spatial development strategies. Then you have a series of design guidance, and there is then the design review process, as well as engagement with your community. What the Government have to do should be relatively limited. They should focus on setting the principles that can be applied to each of the locations, without stifling the innovation and individuality that is necessary in each of the locations. Then you have your planning policy that will look at things such as accessibility and dog waste bins.

At the masterplan stage, you will then look at your walkable neighbourhoods and where your school will go. I do not know whether it would be helpful for the Government to set out the process—because it is almost like a flow diagram—and look at it from the macro level down to very specific things that will be completely individual to the site proposals.

Baroness Miller of Chilthorne Domer: When you say that you do not know, it sounds like you do think that it would be helpful for them to create a flow process.

Catherine Williams: Yes. For the public to have a greater understanding as to what gets decided at each stage and where they can influence what happens, I think that that would be quite helpful.

Paul Augarde: I was going to say the same. The policy is within the planning. In my mind, this is about a framework of an approach to these new settlements, essentially. That includes the governance, setting the vision and creating the place journey. There is an expected set of steps that goes through, as well as the place-making principles that we heard. I think that it is a framework rather than a policy.

Baroness Miller of Chilthorne Domer: Thank you. That is very helpful.

Q12 **Viscount Hanworth:** Can you give me a critique of the design faults in previous generations of new towns, including concerns about the design of the houses and the topography of the settlements? More specifically, what has happened to the standards that used to be imposed on all new residential buildings? I am thinking, for example, of the Parker Morris standards that prevailed for 30 years, from 1960 to 1990, and thereafter

they were abolished. What has happened? Have they been replaced in any way? My first question is about critique. Maybe we can start with Paul—and be as scathing as you possibly can.

Paul Augarde: I could not possibly—

Viscount Hanworth: No, no, please.

Paul Augarde: We are working on them, and they each have their own charms. I think that there is quite often a sense of disconnect in urban extensions, for instance. In Basingstoke, there is a disconnect between the town and the urban extension, because building in the 1960s was under the car generation, and so there was a huge amount of reliance on the car. There is often a walking and cycling fracture between the new settlements and the town centres that they were linked with. I think that is problematic.

There is a more fundamental point. I could go on about the build and the quality that is, in many ways, failing now. It is a major issue. A lot of the old new towns need rethinking as well, and there is an interesting question about us doing “new” new towns and not thinking about the “old” new towns—that is a separate discussion point. For me, there is philosophically something about the offer of the “old” new town and the prospectus that was created: the offer that was once exciting, which drove people to move from London to these places to start a new life and to nurture a new family. Those are the pieces that are most dramatically failing now—that early prospectus is not still there. These are not still new Edens. Part of that is physical, part of that is about connections and some of the design, and part of that is because we have not maintained the stewardship of that original vision.

Viscount Hanworth: I think that is also the case in Bracknell, because what I read was not a prospectus but a very self-congratulatory summary of what they achieved. I am not sure whether you are familiar with that.

Daisy Narayanan: Not specifically.

Viscount Hanworth: It is horrendous.

Daisy Narayanan: I agree with Paul. We live in a changed context now, and it is easier in hindsight to look at what was done then and understand some of the deficiencies. Building vehicle dependency into our new towns is something that we can now learn from, so that we make a different way of living where you can walk to your local school and shops. The point about stewardship is hugely important, because that is when your sense of community and civic pride comes in. As I said before, the Crown Estate has the immense privilege of being able to look ahead 100 years. We are able to then start to monitor and evaluate that as part of the stewardship.

Catherine Williams: Part of the old new towns—this is a generalisation—is their inflexibility. They have not adapted to how the population and environment have changed over the last 40 years. In that

sense, they are still viewed by the majority of people as being stuck as they were. They are no longer seen as the aspirational place to live because they are seen as a 1960s development. That inflexibility has meant that their town centres have not adapted and their transport system has not been adapted as we have changed. We need to, in some way, build in flexibility to future changes.

Viscount Hanworth: Going back to Bracknell, the town centre has indeed been regenerated—but nothing else—and it is now booming. What about the Parker Morris standards, for example, which were very prescriptive? I think that the Conservative Government were averse to them, abolished them and put nothing else in their place?

Catherine Williams: There is the national technical design standards, which are intended to be used unless it is not viable to do so. That is more about the internal spaces within a house. It sets minimum sizes for certain—

Viscount Hanworth: Floor area and heating.

Catherine Williams: Floor area, the sizes of bedrooms and so on. Obviously, you have building regulations. Category M sets out certain requirements for accessibility and adaptability. What you will find is that the majority of district or borough councils will have a set of design guidelines. That is not policy; that is used to inform the design of your development. For example, in Essex you have a series of guidelines about plot orientation, garden sizes, vehicle parking standards and balcony sizes, and they go down to the minutiae. In some cases, that can stifle design innovation and can be used as a bit of a tick-box exercise. It does not necessarily lead to good-quality design, and it is used to make assessments. For example, if you have a 50 square metre back garden, that is another tick.

Viscount Hanworth: There are recommendations rather than prescriptions these days?

Catherine Williams: Yes.

Viscount Hanworth: Yes, so they are not mandatory.

The Chair: I am conscious of time and there are a few other people who want to come in. Baroness Miller.

Q13 **Baroness Miller of Chilthorne Domer:** On the issue you raised about the prospectus, vision or offer, do you pick up that the Government actually intend to produce that?

Paul Augarde: From what I have read, my feeling is that there is a broader story. This is a broader story than 10,000 homes in a set of places. There is that economic narrative that goes with it. There is a sense that the community needs to be part of it. These are elements. What I have not seen is a sense that we need to understand an individual vision for each of the places, an individual governance and an individual

template for a place journey, or whatever we call it. I have not seen those specifics. I think that there is something there that this is not just about more homes; this is a broader piece, and it is about place. But I do not think that that has been defined yet.

- Q14 **Lord Bailey of Paddington:** The comment was made that it is easy to look at these older new towns, as it were, and criticise them, but they were built at a time and to a specification that was probably very relevant then. How do we mitigate the risk of making the same mistake? People, for instance, in this firmament are very anti-car, but there are many parts of London that are economically inviable without cars, and so cars were designed in so that those places work. It is easy for people living in central London to say, "We use public transport". The outer ring of London—zones 4 to 6—simply do not work without a car. How do we encode these things and sometimes push back against the zeitgeist that there is now?

The other thing, while I do agree with the green agenda and I think we may have an opportunity here, is about local power generation. Particularly for a greenfield site, is this not the time now to look at local power generation?

Finally, it seems to me, Paul, that you are saying that each site will need a vision to be articulated about why it should exist, what the hope is and so on, as well as an overall thing.

Paul Augarde: Yes, I think there needs to be an approach and a set of principles and then a framework for how to move towards that. Absolutely, each should have its own vision and its own sense of a journey through its transition.

Daisy Narayanan: It is a great proposition about being anti-car and how we mitigate the risks that we have seen and learn from them. There is something about providing choice and making sure that, as we look to the next 100 years, we are building in the ability for people to have a choice. There should be an option for somebody not to use their car, so the way you then zone your housing or school zone means that the social infrastructure can be created at the very outset. There is something powerful about being able to choose how you travel.

Lord Bailey of Paddington: I am suggesting that there is no choice. People talk about London—London is great; I was born and raised here. The point is, though, that where I live now in London does not work unless you have a car. I would love not to have a car; it is an expensive metal box. The centre of London works because people on the outskirts of London pay for that car to make it work. If we were to demand the levels of public transport that you could get here, then none of it would work. I sense a lack of balance in the conversation. We have modern technology—electric cars and self-driving cars—so we may get to the point where you have a car but you do not own a car. That all needs to be encoded in the plan in the beginning.

Paul Augarde: There is something about flex. This is the point: whether technologies or behaviours change over time, there should be an ability to flex. My feeling is that that is about stewardship, so these things are linked. There is the point about governance and stewardship not lasting for the time of the build but lasting further on, so that the prospectus is reborn. Perhaps we keep the same principles but we apply them in a different time. There is something about how we understand, from an early point of time, what that stewardship model looks like once the hard hats have gone away. That is exactly where you are: that allows a place to flex, to think differently, to maintain its principles and its vision, and to flex to a new vision. Power generation is absolutely part of that. Then you have to enfranchise the people who are there to be able to run those things. It is an incredible opportunity to create powerful community and local stakeholder-led stewardship of place, but we have to think about it at the start. If we think about it in 30 years' time, we will not have built the agency and capacity to deliver it.

- Q15 **Lord Mawson:** I will pick up on that. The long-term management issue is important, and those of us who have worked in some of these early new towns have seen the disasters that we have been left with. Much of it has been managed by the public sector and local authorities—not all but large parts of it. You will know that Poplar HARCA was set up precisely to arrest power from Tower Hamlets Council, which was playing politics with people's housing, and over time to bring investment and transformation. There were reasons why that Act was put together.

One of the challenges going forward is about what we are seeing in local authorities at the moment: the endless fragmentation of councillors. One I work with has nine different parties in it. This does not bode well for the proper management of these new towns. I wonder what your thoughts are about that. We all know—you are saying it and certainly I agree with it—that, without long-term care and management over time that does not play politics with people's housing but gets real about management, the thing becomes a disaster. If you look ahead, it looks like we are walking into ever more fragmentation in the public sector.

Paul Augarde: Yes. I would say that that is about fragmentation or management companies managing our new towns. The missing part, and the only real longevity, is the community living there. There is something in having not just a notional localism but an opportunity to build the capacity of the communities, groups and stakeholders within these places to run themselves long term.

Lord Mawson: Are you saying that what is needed is new thinking and innovation around that space, without assuming that local authorities will do it?

Paul Augarde: Absolutely.

- Q16 **Baroness Warwick of Undercliffe:** The big pressure on the Government, of course, at the moment is the fact that we are not building enough homes, particularly social homes. Somehow the new

towns agenda is rather separate from that because we are talking very long term, whereas the pressure and need are immediate. How do we prevent a whole load of developments that are building more homes falling into the trap of poor design, while we are all hoping that the new towns will deliver something totally different? Most of the concerns are about big housing developments that have none of the facilities that we have all been talking about this morning. How do we manage to bridge that gap?

Catherine Williams: It is almost different. We have an existing planning system that governs the way that normal residential development and mixed-use schemes are applied for, consented and delivered. The new towns programme is separate from that, but the existing planning system, and particularly the way the Government are reforming it, can deal with the standard developments. That is what has been going on for the last 30 years. It is that the—

Baroness Warwick of Undercliffe: There are so many bad ones.

Catherine Williams: There are good ones, though, as well.

Baroness Warwick of Undercliffe: Yes, indeed.

Catherine Williams: The new towns programme presents a better opportunity to bring together all the separate stakeholders. We will probably find ourselves learning lessons from the new towns programme, to better improve the consenting process for normal residential development.

Daisy Narayanan: I agree. For me, there is something about the universal place principles that should be embedded across all development projects, whether they are the new town ones we have talked about here or other everyday projects that are going on now. At the Crown Estate, for example, one of the sites we have is the Thamesmead JV, as I mentioned, but we also have Hemel East, which is not one of these new towns. It is critical that we design both with the same focus of the thriving, inclusive, sustainable places we have talked about.

The Chair: Fantastic, thanks very much. You will be pleased to know that that is the end of that. Thank you, Catherine, Daisy and Paul, for your time. It has been a great discussion. It is the start of our journey, and I am very pleased you were able to be here and share your thoughts. If there are any further things you want to share with us, please feel free to write to us if you wish to, maybe providing examples of or context to what you have discussed. Thank you very much for being with us.