



# HOUSE OF LORDS

Revised transcript of evidence taken before

## **The Select Committee on National Policy for the Built Environment**

Inquiry on

### **BUILT ENVIRONMENT**

*Evidence Session No. 10*

*Heard in Public*

*Questions 109 - 120*

THURSDAY 29 OCTOBER 2015

10.10 am

Witnesses: Dr Hugh Ellis and Paul Miner

#### USE OF THE TRANSCRIPT

1. This is a corrected transcript of evidence taken in public and webcast on [www.parliamentlive.tv](http://www.parliamentlive.tv).

### Members present

Baroness O'Cathain (Chairman)  
 Baroness Andrews  
 Lord Clement-Jones  
 Baroness Finlay of Llandaff  
 Lord Inglewood  
 Baroness Parminter  
 Baroness Rawlings  
 Baroness Whitaker  
 Lord Woolmer of Leeds  
 Baroness Young of Old Scone

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### Examination of Witnesses

**Dr Hugh Ellis**, Head of Policy, Town and Country Planning Association, and **Paul Miner**, Planning Campaign Manager, Campaign to Protect Rural England

**Q109 The Chairman:** Good morning and thank you very much for giving up your time to come and see us. You know that we have been doing this campaign, or at least this inquiry, since July. You have in front of you a list of the interests that have been declared by members of the Committee. A transcript of the meeting will be taken and published on the Committee's website and you will have the opportunity to make corrections to that transcript where necessary. Could I begin by asking each of you to introduce yourself briefly? This is for the record, because everything is being broadcast, and for the help of the transcribers, who will want to know who is speaking.

**Dr Ellis:** My name is Hugh Ellis and I am Head of Policy at the Town and Country Planning Association.

**Paul Miner:** My name is Paul Miner, I am Planning Campaign Manager at the Campaign to Protect Rural England. I am also a chartered town planner and fellow of the Royal Geographical Society.

**The Chairman:** Thank you very much indeed. You have copies of the questions. I am going to ask the first question. How could the National Planning Policy Framework be reformed to improve its effectiveness? We will take it in alphabetical order: Dr Ellis.

**Dr Ellis:** It would need fundamental reform. The NPPF does not provide the framework to deliver the kind of high-quality communities that the TCPA has the aspiration to deliver. This is partly not because of its individual content, some of which is actually very positive; it is

also about the weight given to that content in planning. It is particularly to do with a couple of very powerful clauses, the viability test being one of them and the presumption in favour of the developer perhaps being the other.

There is a really important question about whether or not the Government's outward commitment to place-making is matched by a comprehensive structure for town planning in this country and by a comprehensive set of policies. In our view, it absolutely is not. Place-making in England is certainly in its poorest state since the 1947 town planning settlement. That settlement was extremely important, embodying as it did all the learning that had gone before and setting a framework for extremely ambitious high-quality development. We are not delivering that framework at the moment so, certainly from the TCPA's point of view, we would like to see a fundamental change to policy that really emphasises not simply numbers and quantity, but critical issues around the complexity of place-making.

**The Chairman:** That is very interesting. Does that mean there has been no progress at all since 1947?

**Dr Ellis:** It means that the 1947 system created tremendous ambition as a settlement around town planning, with everything from national parks right through to a strong concern with the built environment. Broadly speaking, that settlement has been undermined and, compared to other European countries, certainly in relation to design, we have not achieved what they have managed to achieve. That is measured precisely in the reduction in standards. We have lost a tremendous number of critical standards from the built environment. Those standards were absolutely important; they started with Parker Morris but you could go on and end with zero carbon. The abandonment of key place-making standards in the built environment has been an absolutely distinctive feature of English planning, certainly over the last 10 years.

**Lord Inglewood:** Chairman, could he tell us which ones he recommends we look at?

**Dr Ellis:** I would start with Parker Morris. That was an attempt, for example, to set important space standards, and I would reflect on the kind of space standards being delivered in London—for example, accommodation with flats of 10, 12 or 13 square metres being delivered. Parker Morris was an attempt, not perfect by any means, to try to set a bench floor below which the performance of the built environment should not fall, and it was abolished in 1980.

Since that time, we have had a variety of different ways of dealing with space standards and other kinds of standards, culminating most recently in the Government's building standards review. That is really worth looking at, because it sets a set of standards for the built environment that is not a national minimum. All those standards are a menu that local governments can choose from, but each standard has to pass through the viability test, which is being used to strip out local plan policy on built environment standards, because the private sector can argue convincingly that it cannot afford to include them. The outcome of that for the kind of built environment we are shaping is a lower level of performance, which has important implications for health, wellbeing and the future of communities and place-making.

**Q110 The Chairman:** That is very interesting, and also very disturbing. You said that other European countries started off in 1947 at the same sort of level—at least, that is the implication—and they have built on and improved their standards. Is there any published evidence to that extent, other than the eyes, when we go and look?

**Dr Ellis:** That is important. Certainly from the TCPA's point of view, we spend a lot of time in Europe and there is a mass of academic and practice work from the Netherlands, in places like Almere, or from Germany, in places like Freiburg and Hamburg—all sorts of places that have delivered and surpassed our cutting edge. It is important that the town planning inheritance in Britain is the inheritance of Ruskin and Morris. It was extraordinarily ambitious and extraordinarily high-performing, and we have lost that edge, certainly compared to Germany. Perhaps the clearest example is the housing performance standards of the Germans; certainly, their ability to build Huf houses and zero-carbon homes is quite extraordinary.

**Paul Miner:** The CPRE has always seen the planning system as hugely important to addressing some of the most fundamental questions that this country faces, in particular how we make best use of land, which is a very restricted resource in countries as small as England or the wider UK with such large populations. We need a long-term approach to how we address issues such as how we build the housing that we need, while protecting our valued and increasingly important natural environment.

Our concerns with the National Planning Policy Framework have always been that it is far too short-termist. It privileges getting a five-year supply of deliverable housing sites above everything else, and it does not really think about where these housing sites should be best

located or how they might be delivered best over time to get better places, in the fashion that we have been talking about.

Also, planning, for us, is hugely important in protecting our natural environment resources, and there is very little in the NPPF about how we might get a better natural environment through things like promoting landscape-scale conservation or the recovery of nature. It encourages local authorities to address those issues, but the encouragement is very weak. We have seen time and again with the plans that are coming forward that the overriding main issue has always been how we get these short-term housing sites.

**The Chairman:** If we just look at the question I asked you—how the National Planning Policy Framework could be reformed to improve its effectiveness—what two things would each of you want at the top of your list?

**Paul Miner:** From our perspective, the NPPF needs to give more encouragement to the local plans and to set a clear lead, such that large-scale speculative planning proposals for housing that are not in accordance with local plans should generally be refused. That would enable local authorities to put more resources into plan-making and developers to work more constructively to get local plans into place. We would also like to see stronger protection for the green belt. The Government should largely maintain existing policy, but they need to be clearer when exceptions to policy are and are not acceptable.

**The Chairman:** We will be coming to the green belt, but that is very helpful, thank you. Dr Ellis, what two things would you like to see?

**Dr Ellis:** A fundamental but perhaps more minor one is that the NPPF needs to reflect the place of town planning and spatial planning at the heart of the creation of a civilised society. So far, we have had reform driven by the idea that planning is anti-competitive and that planning is somehow a brake on innovation of design. All these things are not evidenced and they have been hugely destructive to the creation of long-term sustainable place. The NPPF must recognise and create a line that establishes planning as a truly creative enterprise, as much technical as artistic, so ambition needs to come back into planning.

Secondly, the viability test is the critical issue. It is economically illiterate, if that is the right phrase, in the sense that it creates an economic frame for development that ignores the fact that creating, for example, lifetime homes that do not have to result in large costs to adapt buildings for people perhaps in later life is important. Those policies and requirements are

being struck down using the viability test, because it simply focuses on the needs of landowners and developers in the short term. That needs to change.

**Baroness Andrews:** I was just going to ask whether we could have a note on the viability test. Mr Ellis has exemplified it in relation to lifetime homes, which is extremely important, but you can also exemplify it in relation to the things you have been saying in your evidence about zero carbon, design and so on. We have discussed it in the Committee in relation to our volume of housebuilding, but we have not drilled down into the general impacts, so I thought that might be useful.

**The Chairman:** It would be very useful indeed if you can do that for us.

**Dr Ellis:** Yes, certainly.

**Baroness Young of Old Scone:** If you are going to give a note, could you also list, as Lord Inglewood asked, the building standards that you believe have gone in the recent past—perhaps not 40 years ago but in the last 10 years?

**The Chairman:** Cutting corners, yes; quite.

**Q111 Baroness Whitaker:** One of the things we have lost is a national spatial standard. We have had a bit of discussion about that. The Government evidence was very clear that it was not needed, but I would like to ask both Dr Ellis and Mr Miner how a spatial framework for land use policy in England could help to develop built environment policy objectives. Do we need one for that purpose?

**Dr Ellis:** We absolutely do. Nothing could be clearer. We are one of the very few advanced economies that have neither comprehensive national planning nor regional planning. It is very important to say, by the way, that this argument gets bogged down in people saying you are implying some kind of Stalinist end-state vision, but nothing could be further from the truth. The process of planning is about the messy business of trying to mediate change. Having some sense of engagement with that change at a national level simply reflects functional geography, and geography is something that is absent from public policy at the moment, in the most extraordinary way.

As a quick example, and there are many, High Speed 2 was a railway without a plan. It is the idea of the potential demographic opportunities. Whether you think the railway is a good idea or not is a separate issue, but, if you are going to have it, the idea that you would then link that to a series of critical developments that could deal with demographic change in England seems sensible, yet that was absent.

There is absolutely no doubt that the kinds of challenges that play out at a regional and national tier, particularly climate change, demographic change and transport, are critical in a small nation. A national plan would not tell people what to do. It would set out the evidence very clearly—if you like, a laboratory of spatial evidence—at a national level, and then it would perhaps set out strategic areas of growth and it would be relatively light-touch. That is the model that other nations use. That then supports the work of local action, does it not? The terrible tragedy for England is that it cannot have a sensible debate about national and local. Both things have to happen effectively to have an effective and efficient economy, and an inclusive society.

**Paul Miner:** Ministers are already doing some form of national planning, but they are not doing it in a way that is perhaps as accessible or transparent as it could be. For example, the recent round of city deals that have been agreed all have some kind of planning implication in terms of schemes that Ministers have said they will support, but we need to see that delivered in a more transparent and accessible way that also looks at opportunities to improve the natural environment. It is very much focused on short-term economic growth projects and much less on how we can manage our environment in the longer term for public benefit.

When we talk about a national plan, Government departments have done this kind of work before. If you take the national policy statements created since the Planning Act 2008, there is one on nuclear power which actually says where in the country new nuclear power stations will go, so the Government can do it, but it is a question of their being prepared to be open and honest with the country about the choices we face in terms of land. As Hugh rightly pointed out, we need to have a better geographical understanding of the pressures we face.

If you look at the UK and England in a wider international context, we are a country that is probably better placed than many others in the world to deal with the pressures of climate change, for example, because we are in the northern hemisphere. We have seen recently through growing immigration that the UK is a desirable place to live and people want to come here, so we need to think about how we can best manage demographic change and other issues in the longer term if we are to avoid some huge pressures coming up unforeseen to bite us in the long run.

I would pick up in particular on evidence given by one of the people who previously came to this Committee: Mark Tewdwr-Jones, who was involved in the Foresight Land Use Futures project. Some of the points he made were incredibly valuable, and the approach taken by the Foresight study was sound. We did not necessarily agree with all its conclusions, but the approach it took was a very good one and it is a great shame that the issues it raised and the points it made have been buried. That work could be very beneficially dusted off and brought back into the public limelight.

**Q112 Lord Inglewood:** I begin by pointing out that I am a member of the advisory panel of the Friends of the Lake District, which you will know is the Cumbrian branch of the CPRE. I would like to ask each of you—I think you have already intimated what your reply is likely to be—whether you think the plan-led system for development planning is fit for purpose. Following on from that—and concisely, please—are there any particular changes you would like to see? I would also like to go back to the earlier question: are there any other countries, bearing in mind that nothing is exactly comparable, which you think point our country in a better direction?

**Dr Ellis:** The quick answer is that the plan-led system is critical, but it is not fit for purpose. It is very important that, in legal terms, England has never had a plan-led system compared to European-style systems, for example. It has always had this element of discretion, which is a very important part of the process of the 1947 settlement.

I have to preface my comments by saying that we are at an extraordinary time. The Housing and Planning Bill will transform local plans, so the question framed here has to be in the context of the Government's introduction of zonal planning. Zonal planning is a radical change, and Clauses 102 and 103 of that Bill mean that future local plans in England will be of an entirely different character. Attempts that are passing around to say that this is an evolution of English planning are really quite wrong. Zonal planning plays out in the United States in a particular form. Its implications there for social and racial segregation have been enormous. It has been challenged in the Supreme Court on the basis of its outward use for racist motives in American cities, so there is an enormous issue about how zonal planning plays out. However, zonal planning in European countries can be very positive. There is something here that perhaps we could use as a model.

The core of it, certainly from communities' points of view, is that it is very difficult to understand why plans are made and ignored. That is a great difficulty for the planning



system and something that brings planning into disrepute. We have to grapple with this critical issue of whether we have a plan-led system or not, if plans are going to be overturned in the way Paul has described. The appeal success rate on major housing is up at 50%, which is historically unprecedented; it has never been that high in the post-war period—it reached about 43% in 1986-87—so we have an appeal-led system, truth be told.

**The Chairman:** We heard about that before and I understand why it arose.

**Dr Ellis:** In that sense, there is a need for a fundamental look at the plan-led system.

**Lord Inglewood:** Have you a clear idea of your own of what you, as an individual who has knowledge and considerable expertise in this area, would do?

**Dr Ellis:** Yes, I would go straight to the Dutch system. Although the Dutch system is currently being deregulated, which is a lesson they are learning from us, it has a combination of elements and cultures and is a very strongly public-sector-led planning process. The private sector, of course, is the developer still, but that sets plans. If you want to change—the success of Almere and those places is having a very strong progressive plan. People buy into that plan and the plan is then delivered through development corporations and other mechanisms through the public sector. That was the framework; of course, they got that framework from us. That was the framework we created in the first 20 years post-war, and the Dutch said, “That looks very effective. We will copy that”. In some senses, we are just borrowing our learning back.

**Paul Miner:** It seems to me that we are moving towards a zoning system but, if we are to do that, then we must properly manage that and make sure that local authorities have the proper amount of time to adjust to a new zoning system. Some of the measures in the Housing and Planning Bill—for example, the proposal for a new permission in principle—are going to have a huge effect on how local plans operate. In future, local plans are going to have to go into a lot more detail about how individual development schemes are brought forward, the absolute number of houses, how they are designed and the supporting infrastructure. That will need to be properly managed. There are only one or two local authorities—Cherwell in Oxfordshire, for example—that currently have local plans that could in any way be described as following a zoning approach.

Yes, it matters hugely what kind of zoning approach you take. In Germany and the Netherlands, zoning works well, encouraging custom builders to come forward very quickly with new developments that look very good. But, regarding the American system, Hugh

made the point about entrenching racial segregation and there are big problems in terms of urban sprawl as well. The kind of zoning that has been entrenched in America has encouraged a particular model of very low-density housing development, and there are serious dangers if we started going down that road in this country. We are seen as a leader across the world in preventing urban sprawl.

**Q113 Baroness Andrews:** I want to try to roll up my two supplementaries, Lord Chairman. First of all, I want to take you back to the spatial thing, Dr Ellis. How can we reintroduce a spatial element back into planning? What would be the process? Would we be talking about reintroducing the regional spatial strategies, or about taking the duty to co-operate and adding something extra? What do you think has been the impact of the absence of a spatial strategy on the power of developers to drive their plans through the system by appeal, as it were? My other question is not really related; it is to do with the Housing and Planning Bill and what you are saying about the march of deregulation. To what extent is that Bill going to exacerbate the failure of the planning system, because deregulation has simply gone too far to guarantee any standards of quality and spatial proportion, shall we say?

**Dr Ellis:** In reverse order and as quickly as possible, the proposition behind the deregulation of planning is that you unleash a private sector tiger that will build enough housing at a high standard. The extraordinary thing about the deregulation of planning is that, up until March 2015, in that calendar year, we approved 261,000 new units of housing through planning, and the private sector on its own, without housing association support, built 112,000, and starts are declining.

The interesting thing about the European model is, if we could take the ideology out of this, we would have a dreamy scenario. When I talk to the Germans about the debate in planning in England, they say, "We see planning as a toolbox. We take tools out of the box and we use them to create places. You see the toolbox as intrinsically bad before you have opened it". The debate on planning and place-making needs to go back to where it was when the 1947 system was there. Four eminent lawyers, establishment figures, solved the problems of how you manage land democratically, and the 1947 system was born. Those principles, by and large, should remain.

Deregulation is not the answer, because the built environment is so special. Land is such a special commodity. Housing is also a special public good. All these things mean that the

character of building places has always been unique; it has been unique for 4,000 years and it remains unique as an enterprise. It should be one of the great enterprises of a civilised society. The deregulation of the built environment will not help the Government's objectives in building more homes. In our view, it certainly is building a quality of home that is substandard. Gardens are not heresy—it would be quite nice to have some for people. The same is true for space standards and important design standards. This debate is heading in one direction and it is the wrong direction.

Yes, of course the end of regional spatial planning was politically expedient, but it was intellectual vandalism. Regional planning contained data and data are not intrinsically bad or political; they are simply data. What we needed there was a way of reflecting that. Now, the duty to co-operate can never be made to work. It is fundamentally a process of getting people to speak to each other and demonstrating that they have spoken to each other. That is not a proxy for strategic planning.

I will just give one final quick example, which could make our lives so much easier. Everyone thinks the new towns programme was a big programme imposed on local communities. It turns out that Milton Keynes was a locally led development. Buckinghamshire County Council made a judgment in the early 1960s that they did not want urban sprawl in all their villages. They wanted to concentrate a housing growth problem and deal with it strategically. The duty to co-operate cannot let you do that. In terms of what this nation needs, where there are 20 district councils and 18 of them might be constrained, the logic surely has to be for sustainable development. This is what regional planning did. You decide on strategic growth areas, as a well-served service of infrastructure, that do not have the impacts on the natural environment that Paul described, and you develop places along those lines.

**Baroness Andrews:** Does this need legislation?

**Dr Ellis:** No, the legislation is all there. In fact, the legislation for the new towns programme, the New Towns Act, which we are suggesting needs to be updated, is still very powerful. The issue is that people do not want to use it because they think it is about central imposition, but, actually, the programme was locally led, in part.

**Baroness Andrews:** It could be done by leadership and practice incentives by Government.

**Dr Ellis:** It could be done, yes. It does not require a new law. It requires a new understanding and a new culture to see the meeting of housing needs, not in whole—I am not suggesting all of it is met like that, because places need to grow more evenly—but there

is a very powerful case for meeting some of the major housing need through strategic new highly sustainable communities. That is an idea we pioneered and it is an idea, interestingly, that we have turned our back on. Bicester/Cherwell is an example, obviously, and then you have Ebbsfleet, which I am slightly more dubious about. There are issues about how we get strategic growth happening. The tools are with us; the issue is much more about whether we care to use them.

**Paul Miner:** There is no doubt that the way regional strategies were abolished had the kinds of effects Baroness Andrews was highlighting in her question. Many local authorities across the country put a lot of work into regional plans. Although they are often characterised as top-down plans, in fact, conferences of local authorities put these plans together. Many local authorities relied on regional plans to give them the kinds of strategic policies they needed. I do not think many people are suggesting that we return to the old model of regional planning; also, Ministers realise that they need to bring strategic planning back. In many cases, we are seeing with the city deals that local authorities are being specifically encouraged to have some kind of formal arrangement for doing a strategic plan. Greater Manchester, for example, is now producing a joint spatial plan. We think that is an encouraging sign, because you need to do planning at that level.

What particularly concerned us about the way the regional plans were abolished was that it was done in a way that did not allow local authorities to retain the policies or the evidence they needed. Also, it got rid, in practice, of the brownfield-first approach that we had in national policy during the 2000s. When the regional plans were in place, they looked to concentrate development on brownfield sites within the major conurbations but, since the NPPF has come into force, local authorities have had to work out what their own housing need is and then meet it in full within their own area. The way that has been done in practice has caused huge problems, because there is no clear agreed method for assessing housing need or deciding what objectively assessed need is. We are going to produce further evidence on this shortly, which we would be very happy to share with the Committee, but it has caused huge problems for local plan-making and we need government to be clearer about how housing need should be met and give more encouragement to local planning again and, in particular, strategic plans.

**The Chairman:** Anything you have that you think would enlighten us would be very useful. I know we are making a rod for our own backs; we have a huge amount of evidence already, but we still have to try to do this well.

**Q114 Lord Inglewood:** Mr Ellis, you said that we have an appeal-led planning system. Do you think this is the absolute antithesis of a democratic planning system? Invariably or very frequently, you have councillors who take decisions at development control level or plans that have been put together with public consultation. We are then seeing the wider system saying, “Actually, we do not want to do it the way you want to do it. We want to do it the way the system wants to do it”. As you yourself said, planning is an art and it is also a technique. It is not random. How do you see the relationship between the appeals end of it and the democratic input interfacing?

**Dr Ellis:** It is very troubling. Zonal planning on a European scale removes that tension, because it genuinely is a plan-led system. There is no doubt that is why the Dutch system has those advantages. High levels of appeal traditionally bring the system into disrepute. It also raises this question again, which is fascinating but unresolved, of how much power we want to give communities over their future. The appeal system really brings that into focus. There is an insufficient amount of public policy time devoted to resolving that problem. The last full investigation of people and planning was in 1968—the Skeffington report. It is extraordinary that no government since that time have set anything up, neighbourhood planning aside, which is not a full solution to the problem you describe; it is a separate problem. We have not worked out how much power we want to give communities.

For us as an organisation primarily focused on providing a decent home for people, we want local communities to face their responsibilities for providing people with a home, but you have to have a system for doing that, it seems to us, that retains that democratic element. People will reference the Chinese system of planning and always say it is much more effective than ours, but it is the wrong exam question, surely. We are trying to plan democratically, which is eminently more complex.

**Lord Inglewood:** If you have extreme nimbyism, you have to somehow counterbalance it with an appeals system, do you not?

**Dr Ellis:** You absolutely do. The difficulty we have is that that process is not worked out. One of the reasons why there is a relationship between those appeals and why regional planning was such a good idea was precisely that issues of major growth could be resolved

strategically. What is happening now is a fragmentation. Each district has to consume its own smoke, in housing terms. You could argue that that is a good thing and what responsible communities should do, but it fails to understand that places are very different. Where they are heavily constrained by designations or not having proper services, for example, then plainly a strategic response would be better. It would be much better to resolve it through Milton Keynes than through 1,000 appeal decisions. So there is a strong relationship between having a logical narrative for town planning and reducing the amount of appeal; but that fundamental issue about people and planning being at the heart of it really needs some attention in policy terms.

**Paul Miner:** If I can add to Hugh's points, this problem with appeal-led development is a very serious one. In our written evidence, we highlighted that in about 72% of cases, a local authority could not demonstrate a five-year supply of deliverable sites and appeals were granted. There is another effect on local democracy, which is blatantly financial, because local authorities having to defend their position for appeals is hugely expensive.

To give one example, Cheshire West and Chester Council recently published a cabinet committee report that showed that they had spent about £1 million defending themselves in losing planning appeals. That is money that could be far better spent on forward planning and setting visionary aspirations for where housing should go and how the environment should be protected within that district. Many local authorities see what is happening in these other cases and often throw in the towel and just grant permission for substandard, poor quality or inappropriate development, because they do not feel confident defending their position at appeal.

**Q115 The Chairman:** I would just like to ask if you are going to deal with skills or people's ambitions to become planners. Has there been a dearth of planning? How is it that, in 1947, things were great and there were good planners, and there are no planners now? Is it just that they are all so frustrated?

**Dr Ellis:** There is a massive demoralisation in the planning service; it is true. We really need to transform that. Planning education needs to be transformed. You cannot expect the young enthusiastic people I meet all the time in planning schools to stay in planning when there is such a weight of criticism, most of it unfounded, loaded on to the profession.

I am not interested in defending planners per se. It has to be about outcomes and what we actually produce but, if you want visionaries to get back into town planning, we have to

make sure that we all agree that planning can be a visionary activity. I would stress that issue. I know it is an unpopular one, but planning was about art. If you look at development plans from the 1950s, they always begin with a piece of Tolstoy and are brilliantly illustrated. It is interesting that it would be inconceivable now for a local development plan to say, “We have aspirations for people’s wider welfare, wider artistic ambition or cultural ambition”. These documents are likely to put you to sleep within 20 minutes, because that visionary element has been ironed out of them and that is a great shame.

**The Chairman:** I am breaking my own rules on not interrupting, but you have not made any reference to local areas that have a completely different culture. The people in South Yorkshire, for instance, would not thank you for the stuff from Lancaster or whatever, so you have to take that into consideration too. It is the local history.

**Dr Ellis:** The original local plans had a remit to strongly reflect, in their opening chapter, that kind of context. It is true that one of the great flaws of the National Planning Policy Framework is it has no recognition of the diversity of place that exists in England. It is extraordinary when people talk about planning being a barrier. Certainly in my own patch, in the North Derbyshire coalfield, we have been trying to plan for almost anything of any kind, for ever. There is no barrier to development. There is an extraordinarily strong sense of wanting to develop brownfield sites; what there is not, is the supporting infrastructure and supporting regional plan.

**Baroness Finlay of Llandaff:** I was wondering, from the way you are talking about this, how we can get an assessment of the impact on the health of the community, on living and on biodiversity, and an assessment of the wider impact of decisions. The effects on health and biodiversity go much further than a narrow geographical site. How do we get that impact assessment in the system?

**Dr Ellis:** I will say a quick word about health. There has been a transformation in the last five years, from Public Health England working, certainly with the TCPA, on producing guidance for local authorities on the connection between the built environment and health. It is extraordinary that we had apparently forgotten that connection, since planning had partly emanated from a health background. There is now the most extraordinary set of very real evidence about how the built environment affects people.

The NPPF mentioned green infrastructure just once and removed and abolished the guidance without any replacement, as a result of this review of guidance that was on Natural

England's website. There is now an active conversation going on with DCLG about whether we can get some guidance back on green infrastructure. Green infrastructure has a multi-functional impact on flood risk, wellbeing, people's health, recreation, obesity and all these issues. The difficulty about getting health impact assessments formally into this process is that they should be there and, for some major developments, they are there. Now we have devolved public health back into local authorities, we hope for a more fruitful relationship between planning and public health, but the cultural gap between the two professions is very big. Planners are constantly saying, "We do not have time for that. We are just going to do the very bare minimum".

One of the most important reviews under way at the moment into the local plan is the ministerial review of the local plan process. In our evidence to that, we made it absolutely clear that they must not use that review process as a way of making planning more stupid. Plans do not have to be long, but they have to have a complete set of policies to understand how people work, particularly in relation to public health.

**Paul Miner:** On the biodiversity point, picking up on what was said about the local plan review, what gives us particular cause for concern about that is that many people have argued over a long time that local plans are too long, they take far too long to prepare and they have far too many detailed policies. When you drill down into it, a lot of these so-called far too long and detailed policies are actually well established policies that do not involve too much of local authorities' effort in reviewing and updating. They are policies, for example, such as the protection of local wildlife sites and policies that show what the landscape character of an area is and how it should be best protected. It is vitally important that we keep those policies in the future and that, when we talk about local plan preparation, we do not get too hung up about how long plans are, because how long a plan is may not be that related to how much effort goes into preparing it.

I would also refer back to my earlier point that, since the NPPF has come into force and probably before that as well, to be fair, there has been this overriding obsession with meeting housing targets, to the exclusion of the other valuable functions that planning performs. Biodiversity and landscape are good examples of that. I know that later you will be coming on to the green belt but, if you look at the green belt reviews that have been carried out in this country, they nearly always focus on what sites could be released from the green belt for development. They do not really look at how you can achieve a policy that is



in the NPPF—paragraph 81, I think—which says that local authorities should plan positively for the beneficial use of the green belt. In many if not most green belt reviews, you will find few examples of local authorities thinking, “We could probably plant more trees there or extend a local wildlife site here”, or something like that. That illustrates the kinds of problems we are facing.

**The Chairman:** It is an afterthought.

**Paul Miner:** Yes.

**Q116 Baroness Parminter:** For the record, I ought to declare that I was previously Chief Executive of the CPRE. In the evidence submitted by both of you, you cite how much you welcome the introduction of neighbourhood planning, but seem to suggest that there are opportunities to make it work better. Could you be specific about how that could be achieved?

**Paul Miner:** There are two points to make here. One is that, certainly from CPRE’s perspective and I think TCPA as well, we have strongly welcomed neighbourhood planning. We think it can be a very beneficial means of getting communities more involved in planning and getting more people skilled in the process as well, by making it more open to involvement at the local level. We have seen a very positive development in terms of the number of neighbourhoods that have designated themselves for the purpose of making neighbourhood plans. There are probably about 1,200 across the country, which is broadly in line with what the department was expecting.

But the department has probably underestimated the amount of skill and effort that is needed to get a neighbourhood plan through the various processes, from consultation to examination to adoption. We have about 100 neighbourhood plans that have passed through examination, and 57 that have been adopted or made. In some cases, that is due to the fact that there are insufficient local plans in an area that give neighbourhoods a context within which to work, but there have also been a lot of cases where we have had this problem with appeal-led development, where developers have been looking to frustrate neighbourhood plans by getting in speculative proposals ahead of the local plan and causing a huge amount of controversy and opposition in the local community, who would prefer to see different sites developed.

What we think needs to be done is that, on the one hand, the Government could encourage local authorities to support neighbourhood plans more. There are some measures in the

Housing and Planning Bill that might possibly help, but they need further scrutiny to make sure they are doing that. We also think that communities should be given the right of appeal, where they are well advanced in producing a neighbourhood plan, to resist these kinds of speculative proposals that we have been seeing in many parts of the country. That way, not only can they be confident in producing a neighbourhood plan that it will not be trumped, but it would also encourage developers to put some of their resources into supporting neighbourhood planning too. As we have seen over recent years, there is a growing inequality of resources between the public and private sectors in planning. Currently, the private sector holds most of the resources, but they should be encouraged more than they currently are to use them for constructive ends and to work with communities, rather than trying to foist development upon them.

**Dr Ellis:** I would only add that, in respect of our concerns about how socially inclusive they are, you cannot argue with the scale of implementation but, in our experience, it is mostly people like me who participate in neighbourhood plans. There is nothing wrong with that, I guess, but it is extremely worrying in complex urban environments, particularly when neighbourhood forums, which are not accountable, in urban areas are making plans. There is insufficient targeting of resources. The department, essentially, does not target resources in relation to those silent voices who find it very difficult to participate in the planning process. Neighbourhood planning should have been a real tool to make that happen.

The fact that neighbourhood plans will be allocating sites and that those sites will benefit from automatic planning permission will transform the nature of neighbourhood planning, and I am not sure that it will help, because it will create an additional burden on the neighbourhood plan and it will potentially invite a lot more controversy. It is not necessarily a wrong proposal but, certainly in urban areas, neighbourhood planning is not enough. It does not solve that people and planning problem. It would be great, for example, to see positive and creative measures concerning how people could be involved in local plans and wider regional and national planning.

**Q117 Baroness Andrews:** You just said something really important, Mr Miner, about the inequality of resources available to the public and private sectors, because that has implications for everything. I have two very short questions. First, is the ministerial review of local plans going to include a review of neighbourhood planning and neighbourhood plans as well? My second question relates to the Housing and Planning Bill. You have touched on

the deregulation that may follow from that Bill. Will that impact on neighbourhood plans too, and to what effect? What will the Housing and Planning Bill do for neighbourhood planning? Can you unpack that a bit for us?

**Paul Miner:** I will say a couple of things briefly. As I understand it, neighbourhood planning is specifically outside the terms of reference of the local plan review, but, in practice, I think they will have to look at it to some degree.

**Baroness Andrews:** Do you know the timetable for that review?

**Paul Miner:** It should publish fairly quickly. The deadline for the call for evidence was the beginning of this week, I think, or the end of last week.

**Baroness Andrews:** It is an internal Government CLG review.

**Paul Miner:** Yes, it is.

**The Chairman:** How long do they normally take?

**Baroness Andrews:** Often, the CLG has gone outside for chairs, but it sounds as if they are doing this rather quickly. Is this prompted by the general anxiety about the low number of starts, et cetera? It is a housing-driven review.

**Paul Miner:** The main anxiety is that it has taken longer for local plans to get in place than Ministers perhaps said they thought it would, in the past, and there still is no comprehensive local plan coverage across the country. There are some figures in our evidence, but we can send the Committee further information on that, if needed.

**Baroness Andrews:** Have you given evidence on how local plans can be speeded up? You have already said that the suite of documents that goes into a local plan does not have to be altered. You can still have your sustainability plans, your environmental protection plans and so on.

**The Chairman:** Where is the call for evidence? Is it on a website?

**Paul Miner:** It is on the gov.uk website, yes, and we would be happy to share our submission to the local plan review with the Committee.

**The Chairman:** That would be very useful. Thank you very much.

**Dr Ellis:** On the Bill and deregulation, it is very important that the Bill, which introduces this very radical zonal planning system, was not subject to a White Paper, so we cannot understand it. It is impossible to understand what is being proposed, because it is a Treasury proposal implemented by DCLG which is not worked through in a way that we can fully understand.

One very important point is that the Bill sits in a wider context of deregulation, particularly permitted development. Permitted development means that local plans and neighbourhood plans are intrinsically less powerful, because we are removing controls that they previously dealt with and it is absolutely not an exaggeration to say that, in places like London, we have lost control of the urban environment. The transfer of a building from office use to residential is perfectly legitimate, so long as it has planning permission and has gone through the process. It can now happen with no consideration for child play space, no contribution for education and no contribution for 100 other place-making issues, because the prior approval process considers only three things. That may be very powerful for growth, although that is debateable—the evidence is not so clearly there for that—but it is potentially leading to the kinds of places that really are the slums of the future.

**Baroness Andrews:** Again it is housing-driven. Change of use has been primarily designed to release things like retail space for housing. All I am saying is that a lot of these things that have perverse consequences, which are to do with this rather subtle bit of planning, are going to have catastrophic effects on place-making. They will certainly be intensified if you have zonal planning with a permitted development. It essentially means you have ghettos without sufficient infrastructure. Am I right about that?

**Dr Ellis:** That is right. The critical unresolved issue with zonal planning is where you locate the place-making quality standards. You have to give permission in principle in the plan. This negates the whole basis of the fact that detail and principle in planning are intimately related. How is it possible to give permission for something in principle, without understanding its detailed design or flood risk mitigation or sustainable urban drainage or proportion of social housing? I could go on. It misunderstands the intellectual process of making planning decisions and it is certainly not like the Dutch system, by the way. It is certainly not that.

**Paul Miner:** As we understand it, many of the changes in the Housing and Planning Bill are directed towards requiring local authorities to support neighbourhood forums through the process, whereas at the moment neighbourhood planning is purely discretionary. It has been suggested by some that some local authorities are preventing neighbourhood plans coming forward. We are not sure how well founded that is, but it may well be influencing some of the proposals in the housing Bill. To go back to what I said earlier, the far more

significant reason why many neighbourhood plans are struggling is gaps in local planning coverage.

**Q118 Lord Clement-Jones:** So far, you have both been agreeing quite heavily on most issues. I want to come on to something I think you might disagree on, which is the whole issue of brownfield development and housing, and whether or not it should be encouraged and prioritised for housing. The context, to some degree, is the fact that we have heard evidence that there has been over-reliance on large strategic sites, which can limit the potential output for housing. It therefore may be better to concentrate on some of the small sites. It is part of that same debate, I suspect, but do you think that housing needs can be met through brownfield development? What policy changes are needed to ensure that the supply potential of brownfield land is developed?

**Paul Miner:** We believe that there is a strong case for a brownfield-first approach in national policy, and it goes back to what we were asked about at the beginning—about changes to the NPPF. That would be one of our leading changes, too. It is not just about the large sites; it is also about the small sites. One of the problems that we have been seeing since the NPPF came into force is that local authorities are not being encouraged to identify the smallest sites. In their strategic housing land availability assessments, they are generally encouraged to focus on sites of 10 dwellings or over but, if they did more work to identify the small sites, not only would they pick up on a large reservoir of brownfield potential; they would also be encouraging small and medium-sized housebuilders back into the market a bit more, by making available the kinds of sites they can thrive on.

When we talk about brownfield-first, it is important to remember that it is in terms not just of planning but of prioritising Government investment. We should not underestimate the amount of support the Government are putting into encouraging new development, especially in the northern regions. We can send the Committee a bit of further information that we picked up about the amount of new housing stock in the north-west, for example, which is actually being funded by some kind of public subsidy through the Homes and Communities Agency or others.

We have seen some good statements by Ministers about looking to get brownfield sites through the system, but it is important that the Government are backing up those words with financial support. Some brownfield sites are being supported through city deals, but a lot of what we would say is unnecessary greenfield development is being supported as well.

We need a clearer approach from Ministers so that, when they are working on devolution with local authorities, when they are supporting the delivery of new housing, they are taking all the opportunities they can to use brownfield sites, because it is not just about providing housing; it is also about a range of public benefits that, in many cases, could include getting rid of an environmental nuisance, like a contaminated site.

**Lord Clement-Jones:** Of course, they have made certain proposals that encourage brownfield sites, including something you probably would not approve of: permission in principle. How far do you go as a Government in encouraging the use of those brownfield sites?

**Paul Miner:** We think that the Government are right to encourage more brownfield development, but it is important to remember that it is not just about housing. If we are going to build the kinds of communities that people want to live in in the future, it cannot just be a narrow, single focus on housing development. That is part of the problem with increasing these permitted development rights from office to residential, for example. It is just leading to houses in a place that could have much better development if there were more of a mix of uses.

We would support what the Government are doing on brownfield but, on the permission in principle issue, there are some serious potential problems that need to be looked at. We need to make sure that these developments are properly planned for and are in the right places, because the relationship between permission in principle and local plans is not clear enough at the moment. We are concerned that it could be used to short-circuit the local plan process.

I have one further point, if I may. There is also the suggestion that permission in principle could be granted for sites on the Government's proposed new brownfield register. We strongly support a register of brownfield sites, because we showed in the recent report that there was no clear understanding of how much brownfield land is available across the country. This register will help with that, but the register is part of the evidence for local planning. It is not enough in itself for a site to be on the register and then just to be given automatic permission. There needs to be a proper local plan process as well to make sure that we are getting the right development in the right places.

**Dr Ellis:** This is just very complicated. Developing brownfield sites has to be a priority. The planning system has been pretty good at it. The question whether there is any planning

problem with the development of brownfield sites is very dubious, in terms of whether there is any evidence at all that planning has been a problem. There is certainly not in any of the local authorities that I have ever talked to or worked in, in the north of England. There has always been a desperate priority to develop brownfield sites and the problems of development have been technical—such as remediation—and they have been about investment.

Brownfield is part of the solution, but the wider enterprise of place-making means that such sites are not always the right place to develop. Sometimes they are important for biodiversity and sometimes they are unsuitable for housing in other means. Whether they can meet the whole housing need currently presented to us we are quite sceptical about. After all, even with the great suppressed demand in terms of household formation—because people cannot afford to form households—some 230,000 to 240,000 households are still forming each year. We are going to publish some new research on that next week. Those figures create an enormous challenge for us.

Finally, we have also reached a point in planning and development—this is one of those conversations that CPRE and TCPA will no doubt go on having for the next 100 years—whereby it is possible to develop sites, green and brownfield, at much higher levels of biodiversity and design quality than the existing use, sometimes even when that is intensive agriculture.

**Baroness Andrews:** And density.

**Dr Ellis:** Density—absolutely right. This is a wider issue, is it not? There is a sense that development has been problematised, and the reason is that we have been very poor at it. When people say, “Shall we have some new housing development?”, they picture an extremely poor quality built environment.

If you ask the people who live in Letchworth, which is arguably the finest design concept we have ever developed in this country, they are very happy living there. The master plan for that site did not fell one tree, and that was in 1903. The sense that we can build extraordinary places that can deliver net benefits to nature and also to human wellbeing is a vision that was at the heart and beginning of the planning movement.

**Lord Inglewood:** Can we afford it in the round?

**Dr Ellis:** Letchworth paid for itself.

**Lord Inglewood:** That was middle-class people.

**Dr Ellis:** No, Letchworth is still 35% social housing. I am not suggesting that there are not lots of middle-class people living there, but there is a significant contribution.

**Lord Inglewood:** The good stuff tends to cost, and this is one of the problems.

**Dr Ellis:** There is something very important there. Letchworth has a self-funding model. The garden city model, which I know we may not talk about, was so important because it did something that the planning system and European planning systems do. It captures a proportion of the increase in land values, pays down debts and reinvests. Letchworth Garden City funds its three philosophy societies, its theatre, its cinema and a health centre out of a fund created in 1903, based on its ownership of the commercial estate. This is a John Lewis town, if you like. That is the shorthand. The mutualisation of key assets in the town means not only can we build to extraordinarily high standards, but we can self-finance it. The first 10 new towns, although they had design issues, were incredibly profitable. They were so profitable, they lent money to other public utilities.

**Lord Clement-Jones:** Can I take it from that that you are therefore not convinced, either, by the small site versus large site argument? You are arguing for development on a very big scale.

**Dr Ellis:** Actually, I am arguing for a programme of all of it. What we do not do is “big”. Big is not necessarily intrinsically bad, is what I am arguing. Sometimes it can be the most sustainable option. I am curious about why our conversation—not here but in the wider sense—is so polarised. Surely in some places it will be about developing existing villages but, in the Milton Keynes example, it was about Buckinghamshire remaining Buckinghamshire and also producing an extremely economically successful and socially successful place, strategically. It is that bit that we seem incapable of examining at the moment.

**Baroness Finlay of Llandaff:** Just linking to all that, I am wondering whether the areas that a planning group is responsible for are large enough now to allow that type of broad consideration to develop infrastructure that can pay for itself, or are they too small and therefore acting in silos?

**Dr Ellis:** They are too small at the moment. Paul has talked about the devolution agenda and what that might do. One or two combined authorities have asked for development corporation powers, because you need a development corporation to capture those land values. That is the critical mechanism for doing that, so that requires a new planning tool. That is what the New Towns Act did so brilliantly well.



On how you work this out and where they go, yes, that gets back to the geographic question—that in the south-east of England, where pressures are greatest, you need Government to co-ordinate, facilitate and mediate a conversation about where strategic growth will go. If you do not want to do that, you will get multiple fragmented housing development which is poorly serviced, has inadequate infrastructure and sets a problem. We have done this before in this country. It sets a problem that you then have to spend 100 years trying to resolve.

**Q119 Baroness Young of Old Scone:** This is the reverse side of what you have just been talking about, which is the green belt thing. It has done its stuff in many ways, but is now a bit creaky in terms of piecemeal nibbling. Do we need a new policy for the green belt, in order to reshape it for a modern set of purposes, including this broader-scale strategic development perspective?

**Paul Miner:** We think that green belt policy still works well. The fundamental principles of green belt policy are sound and they should be kept. It is important to remember that, when green belts were first established in national policy, back in 1955, they were part of a wider sub-national city region approach to working out how the development of a city should take place, and they were usually accompanied by a strategy for regeneration within the inner cities and the building of garden cities and, by that time, new towns around places like London, Liverpool and Manchester.

We are pleased that the Government have restated their commitment to the green belt, but the policy has been put under pressure through death by a thousand cuts in local plan reviews across the country, because there has not been a proper strategic approach to working out where housing need is best met. We are seeing increasing calls to change the policy and to allow much more development, and we think those calls are misconceived, because they underestimate the true value of the green belt to society.

For example, the Adam Smith Institute reckoned that the value of the green belt to society was about £889 per hectare. It based that value on a study, in 1992, of a few fields near Chester, but green belts also surround places like London and Manchester. They are of huge value to urban communities in those areas. The work of the Natural Capital Committee, and in particular its Chair, Dieter Helm, has shown how much more value there is to the green belt—not only its possible biodiversity value, but its value to the public in terms of being able to see an agricultural landscape.

Also, we have seen many claims that you could do a lot to meet this country's housing need by building a million homes on just 1% or 2% of the green belt, but that is massively overstating the benefits of that approach. If you built in the way they are suggesting, you would be building dormitory suburbs. You would not be building proper new places; you would be building stuff tacked on to the edge of train stations. That would lead to a lot of urban sprawl, in many cases, because there are very few, if any, train stations in the green belt around London that do not already have some development around one side or the other. By building on the remaining bit of undeveloped land near the train station, you would be completely defeating the purpose of green belt.

We need the green belt as a tool to prevent urban sprawl, more than ever. We have seen studies by UN-Habitat and the European Commission that show that urban sprawl is one of the most pressing problems facing the world today. It is most pressing in the areas around big towns and cities, which in England are protected by green belt policy. That is the particular value of it and that is why it is not fanciful to say that, if we did not have the green belt around London, it would sprawl for 50 miles beyond its centre like Los Angeles does.

**Dr Ellis:** From our point of view, the green belt remains extremely important. Again, I would just like to point to the complexities of green belt policy. The green belt is a very successful policy and should be retained, but it plays out very differently across England. The case to retain London's green belt is very powerful, and the original idea of building highly sustainable new places beyond London's green belt still seems to be extremely important, but the gap between Nottingham and Derby is a few hundred yards. There, the issue is urban containment and definition. That is very important. Oxford is a freestanding community. There are highly controversial plans at the moment to think about reviewing Oxford's green belt, but the issues are very different there. Again, it is very difficult to come up with a one-size-fits-all review of green belt. I would say that, in London's case, it is critical to things like urban cooling and climate change—issues that have not really been properly considered.

I would say that we are very positive, though. The original concept for green belt 100 years ago was as a very active resource for local food production, local energy and much greater access for people. The idea that urban populations need to have contact with nature and should not have to travel too far to do that relates very closely now to the issues around the health evidence.

Finally, there is this piece of heresy that we have accepted completely that we will focus the entire demographic future of England on the development of London and the south-east. Liverpool has lost 50% of its population. Liverpool was engineered for a million people in 1938 and now has a population of 400,000. Immediately post-war, Belfast had 440,000 people. Now it has a population of 220,000.

**The Chairman:** That is a bit different.

**Dr Ellis:** It is, but all I would point out is that there is opportunity in other parts of the United Kingdom and other parts of England, which seems to us to be important to examine before we accept solely focusing on the south-east.

**Q120 Baroness Rawlings:** I was going to ask about garden cities and new cities, but you have explained it so clearly with 1903 and Letchworth. Following on from what Lord Inglewood said, basically in 1903 the country was very wealthy at that time. It was thriving. Milton Keynes developed and was successful. What I was not sure about—perhaps you could expand on this—was the point about 1947, which was after the war when money was scarce. In the 1950s and 1960s, money was quite scarce. There were horrors built in that period—massive concrete high-rise buildings that were really not very successful—and a massive amount of old buildings were just pulled down willy-nilly. There was the division of cities like Sheffield and a few others. It was not so wonderful then, and today rather successful developments have taken place around the country. I just wonder what your views are. I would be fascinated to hear.

**Dr Ellis:** It is a very good set of questions about what planning got wrong, and we have to be honest about that. The new towns programme post-war mostly did not include that kind of high-rise commitment. Interestingly, at the time the TCPA argued its heart out against the high-rise modernist move and lost that argument. We deployed Ruskin and they deployed Le Corbusier and we lost. The social consequences of that were very important. The garden city design ethic was very much a vernacular design, a humanist design in its broadest sense, and we forgot that; we decided to put that down. I would dearly love the architectural profession to take some of the responsibility for that, as well as town planning, because they bear it as well.

There is no doubt that—probably more than anything else, whether fairly or not—it was high-rise modernism that discredited the practice and ambition of town planning, because people associated it with being top-down, lacking any sense of human value and all those

issues, which was tragic given where it comes from and what the core values are. The new towns programme is interesting. They struggled with a shortage of materials, for example, so they used a lot of concrete. There was a desperate housing shortage, so there is a sense of expediency about it, but it is worth pointing out that we built 34 places in 20 years that house 2.8 million people. Some of those places, economically and socially, remain very successful.

The difficulty was—and this is heart-breaking—they were all financially viable until the forced repayment of loans in 1980. In 1980, the Treasury insisted on the early repayment of the 60-year loans that had founded the new towns movement. Some of those assets have ended up with the HCA. The HCA still owns assets that were paid down. The new towns programme had to pay the penalty clauses for early repayment, even though they did not want to pay the loans back early. If the programme had continued and run its course, new towns would have had an economic model like Letchworth. They would have had an asset value. It seems to me that, rather than this being some sort of very strange and radical idea, this is really a very English, mutualised approach to building places but, because they do not have that asset value, they all age at the same time and they cannot reinvest in themselves. All of the built environment in new towns now needs a lot of work. It was all built in that 20-year period.

One final thing that is very important, though, is the car culture. Milton Keynes reflected the lesson from America and the fashion to build cities based on the private car. That proved to be a very short-lived idea in design terms, but with massive consequences for cities. Probably no other single design element has done more damage to UK cities than the urban motorway. It is extraordinarily socially divisive; it is environmentally damaging. Now, of course, we face this extraordinary process. The gap between ripping up our trams and trying to redeploy them was about 18 to 20 years—it was that short-sighted. When you pulled up the roads in Sheffield to relay the tram tracks, the old tram tracks were still there. That tells you something very important about this nation: we invented planning, we invented long-term vision and then seemed determined not to plan at the right spatial scale, to forget the visionary sense of it and to be completely obsessed with short-term cycles.

**The Chairman:** That is absolutely right. It reminds us of the thing we were reminded of in Birmingham—the concrete collar around the centre and the damage that did to the centre of Birmingham.

Thank you so much. It has been an absolutely fascinating session and we are very grateful to both of you. If you think that we are going off down quite the wrong track and you have some more suggestions for us, we would be more than willing to accept them and very grateful for them. Thank you.