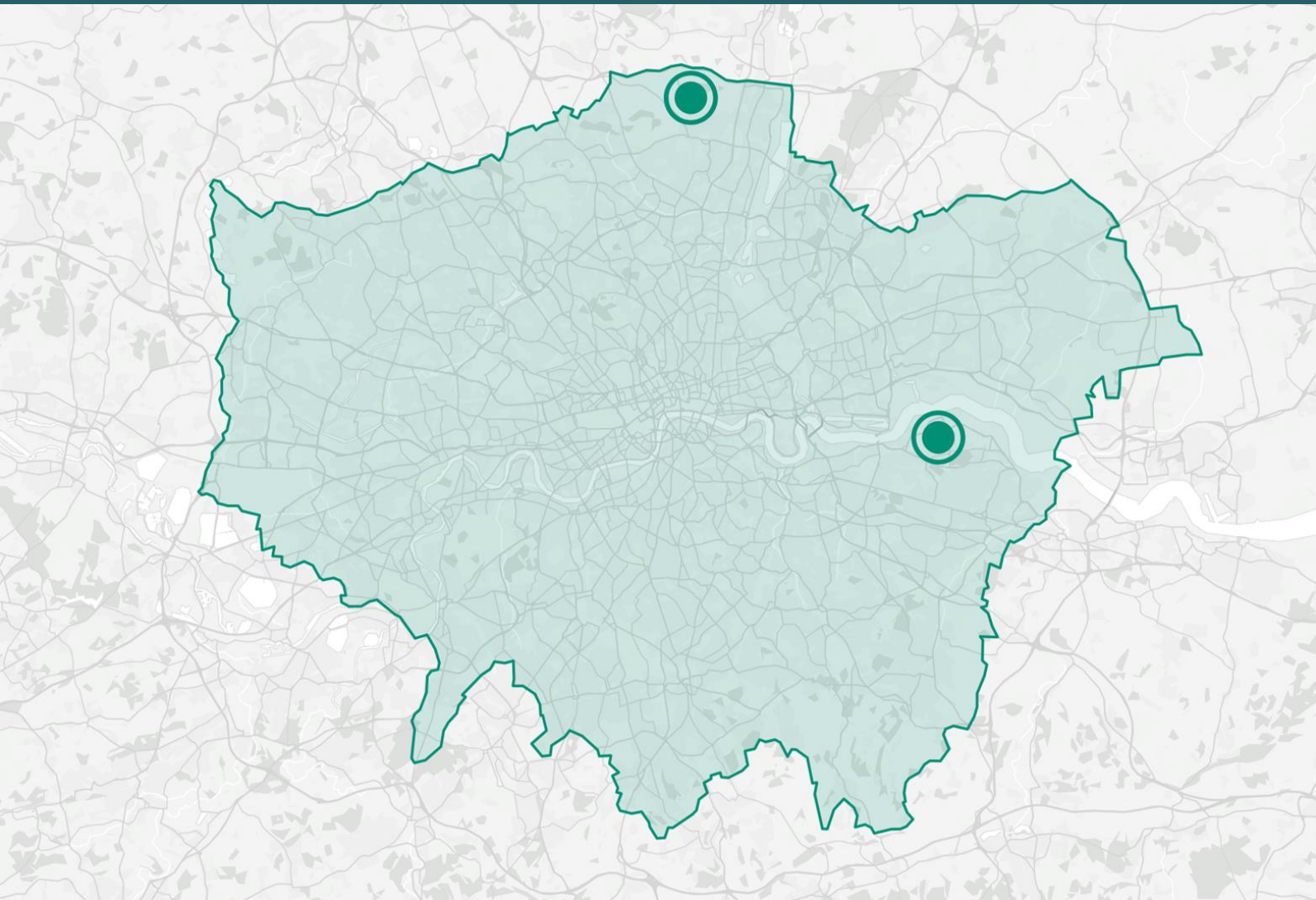


New Towns for London

Planning and Regeneration Committee

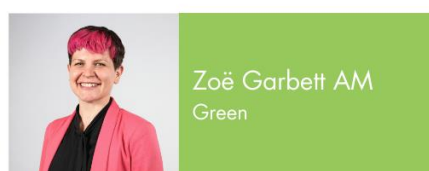
UNDER EMBARGO UNTIL 00:01 AM WEDNESDAY 1 JULY 2026

July 2026



LONDONASSEMBLY

Planning and Regeneration Committee



The Planning and Regeneration Committee examines and reports on matters relating to spatial development, planning and regeneration in London and leads scrutiny of the Mayor's Spatial Development Strategy (the London Plan). The committee also has lead responsibility for scrutiny of the Old Oak and Park Royal Development Corporation.

This investigation was carried out under the Planning and Regeneration Committee in 2025-26 with the Assembly Members listed above.

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Foreword



James Small-Edwards AM
Chair of the Planning and Regeneration Committee

A need for new homes. A need for new towns. It seems simple really. And yet the UK has not built a new town for over half a century.

The idea itself is not new. In many ways, it is an old solution to an old problem. And that problem is the insufficient supply of housing at prices people can afford.

The scale of London's housing shortage and the pressures it places on communities and the wider economy demand action at pace and at scale. In that context, the Government's decision to revisit the new towns model is both welcome and necessary.

We know that new towns can work. Places like Milton Keynes stand as testament to what can be achieved when ambition is matched with long-term planning and delivery. They demonstrate that, done well, new towns can be more than just housing developments. They can be thriving places, planned from the outset to support jobs, services and a good quality of life.

But we should also be clear about the lessons of the past. Not all new towns succeeded in the way they were intended. Across the programme, there were shortcomings in design, an overreliance on the car and, crucially, a failure in some places to provide the transport links needed to connect residents to major centres of employment. Places like Skelmersdale, which was left without a rail connection to major areas of employment, were thus beset by challenges from the outset almost by design.

It is these lessons that make this moment so important because the new towns now being considered for London are fundamentally different from those built in the post-war period. They are not standalone settlements on the edge of cities; rather, they are extensions of London itself, embedded within an already dense and interconnected urban environment.

That difference matters. It means London's new towns must be designed as part of the city's wider fabric, integrated with existing transport networks and communities. They must complement, not compete with, the capital's existing development pipeline.

Yet despite this different context, many of the same core challenges remain. The importance of high-quality, reliable public transport is as clear as ever. And this time, it must be in place from day one. The need for well-designed neighbourhoods, with access to green space and strong community infrastructure, is unchanged. And the importance of creating places and spaces where people actively want to live remains paramount.

Harold Wilson once reflected towards the end of his time in office that “for the same old problems I only have the same old solutions”. The housing crisis is, in many respects, a familiar challenge. And new towns are, undeniably, a familiar response. But that does not mean they are the wrong response.

On the contrary, this report sets out why new towns that are carefully adapted for London, its people and the realities of the modern economy can play an important role in tackling our housing crisis.

Get these right, and London’s new towns can succeed where others have fallen short. Get them wrong, and we risk repeating the mistakes of the past.

The need is clear. The opportunity is real. This report sets out how we can ensure that London’s new towns succeed.

Executive Summary

Eighty years after the New Towns Act 1946 laid the foundations to create 32 new communities, the Government is seeking to revive the New Towns model to address today's acute housing pressure and grow the economy. To this end, two sites in London have been identified as potential places to create new towns. One at Crews Hill and Chase Park in Enfield, the other at Thamesmead Waterfront in Greenwich, with a final decision to come from the Government in the summer.

For new towns to be successful in London, we will need to see strong leadership from the Mayor and the Government to see these ambitions fulfilled. Without this, we risk looking back on the new towns programme as a project that created places with unsuitable housing, poor transport connections and low-quality green spaces, ultimately becoming places where people do not want to live and that make London less green and more vulnerable to climate impacts. To ensure this does not happen, we are calling for new towns in London to come with guarantees that:

- the optimal amount of affordable housing is provided, with social housing being a priority in terms of tenure;
- the types of affordable, social and market houses provided account for sufficient delivery of family-sized and accessible homes;
- public transport is in place from day one of new town residents moving in;
- high-quality green infrastructure is used to create climate resilient and biodiverse new towns;
- new towns are co-designed in a meaningful way with current and future residents, with clear evidence of how this informed all design and planning decisions.

London already has an impressive public transport network to build upon, existing governance structures through the Mayor and the GLA to help support development and a strong economy – all of which helps make any proposal more viable. We must also ensure existing communities are considered and integrated with new towns and that any new town development is used as an additional method to meet the city's infrastructure and housing needs – not as a replacement to other projects.

Recommendations

Recommendation 1

The Mayor should ensure the following conditions are met by any new town development proposal:

- the optimal amount of affordable housing is provided, with social housing being a priority in terms of tenure;
- the types of affordable, social and market houses provided account for sufficient delivery of family-sized and accessible homes;
- all transport infrastructure is in place from day one of residents moving in;
- it comes with a strategy to provide high-quality green infrastructure that improves climate resilience, biodiversity and access to nature;
- it is co-designed in a meaningful way with current and future residents, with robust and timely public consultation and clear evidence of how this informed all design and planning decisions.

Recommendation 2

The Mayor should ensure that each new town is underpinned by a clear, place-specific set of design principles and a coherent masterplan, developed at an early stage and co-designed with communities, to support high-quality architecture, public realm, placemaking and long-term stewardship.

Recommendation 3

As the Government progresses with new town designation, it must also announce a 'New Towns Funding Grant'. This must be a new source of funding that does not draw on grants that have already been allocated to different government departments.

Recommendation 4

The Government should grant the Mayor additional powers to utilise a range of land value capture methods, which could include a comprehensive land value tax or borrowing against future tax receipts.

What are new towns and why are they being proposed?

New towns were originally established in the 1940s to address the UK's housing needs post-World War Two.¹ Following the heavy bombing sustained during the war, major cities saw thousands of homes destroyed and many of the homes that did remain were poor-quality and overcrowded.² To tackle this, the Government created the New Towns Act 1946 which allowed it to designate areas as new towns, which were purposefully built to house those living in poor quality, overcrowded cities.³

Due to their very nature, new towns are different from many other forms of development. Unlike traditional towns or areas that grow organically over decades and centuries, new towns come with a masterplan to create housing, jobs, transport, green spaces and services 'from scratch' at pace. We heard repeatedly through this investigation that when done correctly, new towns are more than just housing.⁴ Instead, they are whole areas designed to meet the needs of those who live there, making them truly enjoyable places to live.⁵ As the consultancy group Arup described it, "New Towns are not housing projects; they are long-term civic systems."⁶

The Government is now returning to the concept of new towns as one way to meet its target to build 1.5 million homes over the 2024-29 parliamentary term,⁷ stating:

"The 1946 New Towns Act was a response to the urgent need to alleviate housing shortages and urban overcrowding in a war-ravaged Britain. The acute and entrenched housing crisis that afflicts England today has far different causes, but the need for equally bold solutions is no less pressing."⁸

¹ UK Parliament, [New towns](#), [accessed February 2026]

² Tony Travers, [Housing Since 1945: The Impact of Policy Change and Ideology](#), 12 December 2025

³ Select Committee on Transport, Local Government and the Regions Nineteenth Report, [Introduction](#), 17 July 2002

⁴ London Assembly Planning and Regeneration Committee, [New Towns for London - Part 1 – Panel One](#), 28 January 2026, p.1 and p.5; and London Assembly Planning and Regeneration Committee, [Call for Evidence – New Towns for London](#), March 2026, Anne Ogundiya Ref No. NT002, p.60; BusinessLDN Ref No. NT005, p.86; London Legacy Development Corporation Ref No. NT010, p.114; Social Life Ref No. NT012, p.129; Thamesmead Waterfront JV Ref No. NT013, p.133

⁵ London Assembly Planning and Regeneration Committee, [New Towns for London - Part 1 – Panel Two](#), 28 January 2026, p.2; and [Call for Evidence – New Towns for London](#), March 2026, Thamesmead Waterfront JV Ref No. NT013, p.135

⁶ London Assembly Planning and Regeneration Committee, [Call for Evidence – New Towns for London](#), March 2026, Arup Ref No. NT003, p.62

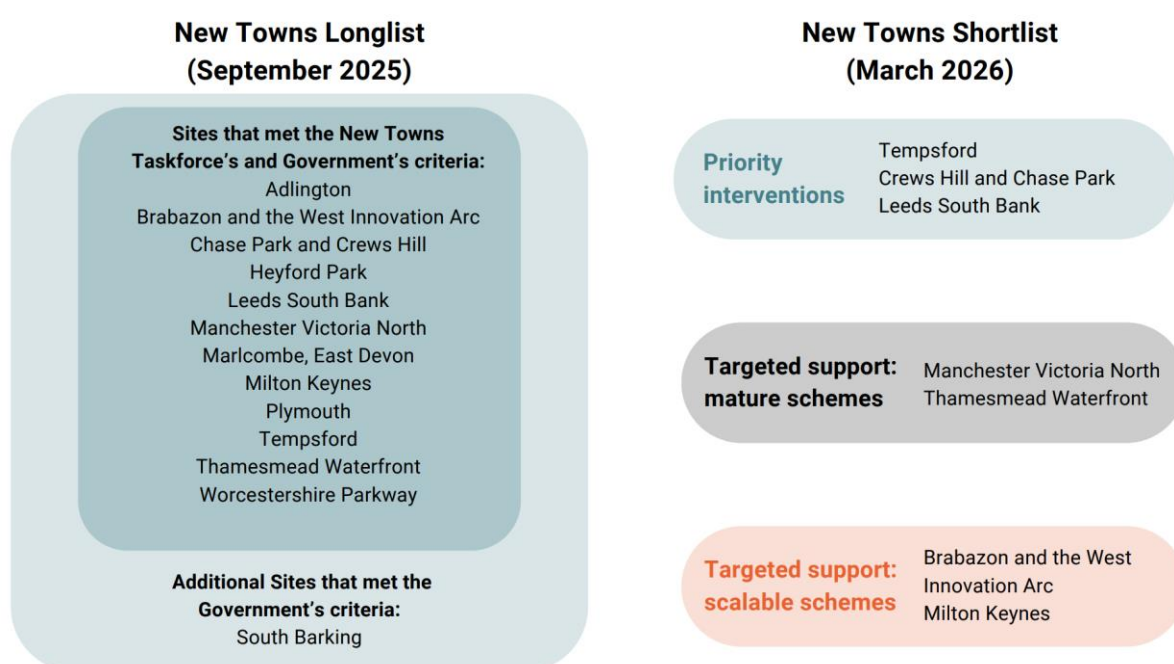
⁷ HM Government, [Plan for Change](#), 5 December 2024

⁸ Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, [New Towns Draft Programme](#), 23 March 2026

In September 2024, the Government established a New Towns Taskforce, assigned to identify and recommend locations for new towns.⁹ As part of this work, the Taskforce was told that these sites should have objectives to support and unlock economic growth, as well as making a significant contribution to meeting housing demand in England.¹⁰ The Government also undertook its own assessment for potential new town sites, which also looked at housing and economic growth, as well as places that could be delivered in an ambitious, innovative way.¹¹

The Taskforce announced its shortlist of sites in September 2025, with the Government’s shortlist following in March 2026 (Figure 1). The Government stated it would confirm which sites will be taken forward for development in the summer of 2026.¹²

Figure 1: Potential new town sites that met the objectives of the Government and the New Towns Taskforce¹³



Two of the Government’s shortlisted locations for new towns are in London.¹⁴ One is **Crews Hill and Chase Park** in Enfield, the other is **Thamesmead Waterfront** in Greenwich (Figure 2).

⁹ Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, [Fully established Taskforce begin their mission to drive forward our next generation of new towns](#), 17 September 2024

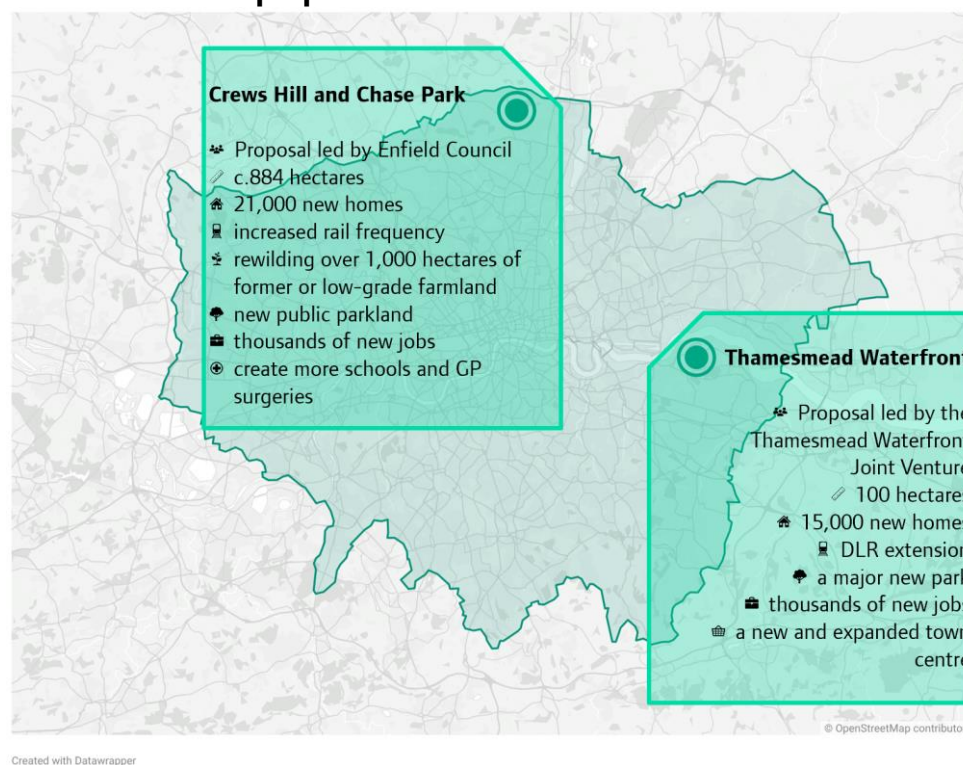
¹⁰ New Towns Taskforce, [Building new towns for the future](#), February 2025

¹¹ Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, [Annex C: Locations Methodology - New Towns Draft Programme](#), 23 March 2026

¹² Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, [New Towns Draft Programme](#), 23 March 2026

¹³ Figure created by London Assembly Scrutiny Team based on data from: New Towns Taskforce, [Report to Government](#), September 2025; Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, [New Towns Draft Programme](#), 23 March 2026; Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, [Annex C: Locations Methodology - New Towns Draft Programme](#), 23 March 2026

¹⁴ Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, [New Towns Draft Programme](#), 23 March 2026

Figure 2: Overview of the proposed new town sites in London¹⁵

The GLA has been supportive of both sites proposed for London. In evidence to the Committee, it stated: “The two shortlisted London new town proposals present significant opportunities to help address London's acute housing need through the creation of sustainable and high-quality neighbourhoods.”¹⁶ Similarly, when we questioned the Deputy Mayor for Housing, he was unequivocal in his support for new towns, stating that “I have always been absolutely clear [that] if we are having new towns nationally, London should benefit from new towns as well.”¹⁷

In May 2026, following the local elections and a change in Council leadership, Enfield Council withdrew its support for the Crews Hill and Chase Park proposal.¹⁸ The Mayor and Government have both indicated their intention to proceed with the development of a new town on the site,¹⁹ though final decisions have not yet been made on the New Towns Programme.

Clearly, Londoners hold a range of views on the prospect of new towns. A YouGov poll from March 2026 shows that Londoners are more likely to support the construction of new town-

¹⁵ Figure put together by London Assembly Scrutiny Officers using information from: New Towns Taskforce, [Report to Government](#), September 2025; Enfield Council, [Crews Hill and Chase Park shortlisted for potential New Town](#), September 2025; Lords Select Committee - Built Environment Committee, [New Towns: Practical Delivery, Written evidence – Peabody](#), May 2025; Inside Housing, [Peabody plans to start on 15,000-home Thamesmead New Town site within this parliament](#), January 2026

¹⁶ London Assembly Planning and Regeneration Committee, [Call for Evidence – New Towns for London](#), March 2026, Greater London Authority Ref No. NT008, p.104

¹⁷ London Assembly Planning and Regeneration Committee, [New Towns for London – Part 2 – Panel Two](#), 11 February 2026, p.1

¹⁸ Enfield Council, [Enfield withdraws from New Town process following change in leadership](#), 28 May 2026

¹⁹ Building Design, [Mayor of London and MHCLG to press ahead with new town plan despite Enfield Council withdrawal](#), 29 May 2026

sized settlements in the UK (52 per cent), than in their local area (38 per cent).²⁰ And a similar proportion of Londoners (39 per cent) opposed such settlements in their local area. Whilst the Committee heard strong support for the two proposed sites – and new towns in general – we also heard specific concerns and strong objections regarding the Crews Hill and Chase Park site in Enfield. These concerns predominantly focused on the proposed site being located on the Green Belt,²¹ and the associated loss of green and natural space.²² We also heard that building on the Green Belt could distract from the Government's 'brownfield first' approach,²³ an initiative that prioritises development on brownfield land, such as industrial estates or car parks that have been abandoned, over other forms of land.^{24 25}

Just as Londoners hold a range of views on the prospect of new towns, so too does our Committee, especially as to whether or not a new town should be created on green belt land. Accordingly, in this report we have not sought to reach a view on whether the Government should proceed with the specific sites it has shortlisted. Rather, we have examined the underlying principles and policy frameworks that should inform the development of any new generation of new towns. In doing so, we have considered how such principles might be applied within the particular economic, social and spatial context of London. This is particularly relevant as England has never had a new town within a city before. The post-war new towns were standalone settlements and later became established local authorities or cities, whereas the proposed new town sites in London are more akin to regeneration areas or urban extensions. Because of this uniqueness, we were keen to understand how any new towns should be delivered *for* London, not just simply in London.

²⁰ YouGov, [Would you support or oppose the construction of new town-sized settlements in the UK?](#) and [And would you support or oppose the construction of new town-sized settlements near your local area?](#), 24 March 2026

²¹ The Green Belt is a planning policy which aims to prevent urban sprawl and to protect the countryside. London's metropolitan Green Belt is a designated area of open land around the capital that extends into the wider South East. Definition taken from: London Assembly Research Unit, [London's Green Belt](#), February 2026

²² London Assembly Planning and Regeneration Committee, [Call for Evidence – New Towns for London](#), March 2026, Action for Enfield's Future Ref No. NT001, p.6-11; Environment Agency Ref No. NT007, p.101

²³ London Assembly Planning and Regeneration Committee, [Call for Evidence – New Towns for London](#), March 2026, Action for Enfield's Future Ref No. NT001, p.7

²⁴ Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, [New 'brownfield passports' to seize the growth opportunities of urban areas](#), 22 September 2024

²⁵ Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, [National Planning Policy Framework](#), December 2024

How new towns could be delivered in London

Since our investigation finished, the Government has stated it plans to include the ten ‘Placemaking Principles’ (see [Appendix](#)) set out in the New Towns Taskforce report in its proposed planning policy for new towns.

In this chapter, we move beyond this national framework to consider how such principles could be applied and delivered in the specific context of London. Drawing on the evidence we have received during this investigation, we set out the key principles and considerations we feel should inform any development of new towns in London. Our focus here is on vision, affordable housing, transport infrastructure, green infrastructure and public engagement.

A new towns vision for London

“Each new town should have a clear long-term vision for creating a well-designed and distinctive place, supported by a town-wide strategic masterplan and design code to ensure placemaking quality.”²⁶

New Towns Taskforce – Vision-led Placemaking Principle

Looking back to the successes of the post-war new towns, the evidence we heard emphasised the importance of a clear and comprehensive vision in the delivery of new towns. John Walker, who was heavily involved in setting up and delivering one of the UK’s most famous new towns, Milton Keynes, told us that there must be “a fairly clear vision of what you want as a community ... [which is] turned into some kind of masterplan that can represent it, not just physically, but also economically, socially and environmentally.”²⁷ This reflects the findings of the Town and Country Planning Association’s (TCPA’s) 2024 report *Health, hope and prosperity: a vision for healthy new towns*. This report presented its own vision for the new towns programme, which it said could act as “both an inspirational goal and as a discipline by providing a benchmark against which to test the outcomes”.²⁸

In this investigation, our guests highlighted a number of indicators that could demonstrate whether a vision for any new town is being achieved. These include quantitative measures such as the extent to which new towns are well connected to public transport²⁹ and the accessibility

²⁶ New Towns Taskforce, [Report to Government](#), September 2025

²⁷ London Assembly Planning and Regeneration Committee, [New Towns for London – Part 1 – Panel Two](#), 28 January 2026, p.2

²⁸ TCPA, [Health, hope and prosperity: a vision for healthy new towns](#), August 2024, p.8

²⁹ London Assembly Planning and Regeneration Committee, [New Towns for London – Part 1 – Panel One](#), 28 January 2026, p.3

of high-quality green spaces.³⁰ We also heard about the value of more qualitative measures of success. Tom Perry Director of Urbanism and Landscape Projects at The King's Foundation charity, described a vision of place rooted in everyday experience and connection to nature, asking:

“can every child see the stars at night? Can they see where the sun rises and sets every day? Can everyone see a tree from their bedroom window? Can you watch tadpoles in the spring and pick apples in the autumn? Does everyone recognise that they are part of this place and value what that means?”³¹

The Committee recently explored the growing disconnect between what Londoners want to see built in their communities and the developments that are actually being delivered.³² We heard overwhelmingly from guests that effective community engagement, early-stage and ongoing throughout the process, is critical to successful design and support for development. We believe this approach is vital when it comes to setting a vision and masterplan for any new towns in London, to ensure they are places people want to live in and be involved in their ongoing development.

In its evidence to the Committee the GLA highlighted the potential for new towns to contribute to housing and economic objectives.³³ It went on to say that potential new town designation in London, with funding, would allow it to “deliver well designed homes and neighbourhoods with the social infrastructure needed for the community to thrive.”³⁴ We recognise that the GLA's evidence was submitted before any decision had been taken on which – if any – of the two proposed sites would be progressed, and that this may have limited the level of detail it was able to provide. Therefore, what the GLA presented can be seen as a starting point on which a strong vision and resulting masterplan for London's new towns could be built upon.

A recent House of Lords Built Environment Committee report called for a compelling national vision for England's new towns.³⁵ Likewise, we believe that any new town in London will need to see a compelling vision for how they will go further than providing housing and boosting the economy, and instead focus on how they will create places that Londoners genuinely want to live in. In particular, the ability to plan at scale offers a rare chance to create new towns with a strong identity, underpinned by a clear and consistent set of design principles that can be co-designed with communities.

³⁰ London Assembly Planning and Regeneration Committee, [New Towns for London - Part 1 – Panel One](#), 28 January 2026, p.4

³¹ London Assembly Planning and Regeneration Committee, [New Towns for London - Part 1 – Panel One](#), 28 January 2026, p.5

³² London Assembly Planning and Regeneration Committee, [Better Design for London – Letter](#), 2 March 2026

³³ London Assembly Planning and Regeneration Committee, [Call for Evidence – New Towns for London](#), March 2026, Greater London Authority Ref No. NT008, p.102

³⁴ London Assembly Planning and Regeneration Committee, [Call for Evidence – New Towns for London](#), March 2026, Greater London Authority Ref No. NT008, p.104

³⁵ House of Lords Built Environment Committee, [New Towns: Creating Communities](#), 26 March 2026

Affordable housing

“New towns should provide a diverse range of high-quality housing, with a range of housing types and tenures to suit the needs of a balanced community. This should include a minimum target of 40 per cent affordable housing, of which at least half to be available for social rent.”³⁶

New Towns Taskforce - Affordable housing and balanced communities Placemaking

Affordable housing has been defined by the Government as housing “for those whose needs are not met by the market”.³⁷ This includes social rent, which is set by a formula tied to local incomes, property size and relative property value.³⁸ The Government’s definition for affordable housing also includes ‘other affordable housing’ which is up to 80 per cent of market rents, discounted market sales housing, and other routes including shared ownership.³⁹ This definition applies in London but the Mayor of London has preferred affordable housing tenures which he categorises as genuinely affordable,⁴⁰ this includes social rent, shared ownership⁴¹ and London Living Rent.⁴²

One of the features of the post-war new towns were provision of high levels of social homes. This legacy can still be seen today with most post-war new towns having a higher percentage of socially rented homes than the England-average (Figure 3).

³⁶ New Towns Taskforce, [Report to Government](#), September 2025

³⁷ Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, [National Planning Policy Framework](#), December 2024, p.70

³⁸ Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, [Policy statement on rents for social housing](#), 1 April 2026

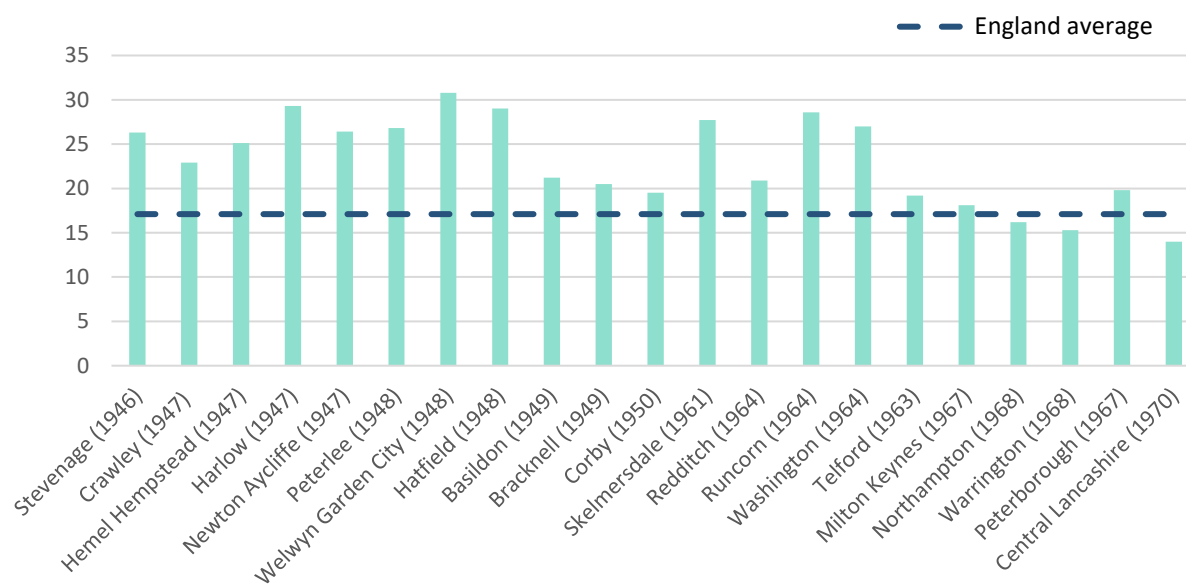
³⁹ Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, [National Planning Policy Framework](#), December 2024, p.70

⁴⁰ The Mayor of London, [The London Plan 2021](#), March 2021, p.182-183

⁴¹ Shared Ownership – also known as ‘part buy, part rent’ – is aimed at households who cannot afford to buy a property on the open market. Under the scheme, you can buy a share in a home and pay a regulated rent to the housing provider on the remaining share. Definition taken from: The Mayor of London, [Shared ownership scheme](#), [accessed March 2026]

⁴² London Living Rent is a type of intermediate affordable housing for middle-income Londoners who want to build up savings to buy a home through shared ownership. The Mayor publishes benchmark London Living Rent levels for every neighbourhood in the capital, updated annually. These are based on a third of average local household incomes and adjusted for the number of bedrooms in each home. Definition taken from: The Mayor of London, [London Living Rent](#), [accessed March 2026]

Figure 3: Percentage of socially rented homes in England’s new towns, with the year they were designated⁴³



Commenting on using the new town model to provide social housing, Charlie Berry Policy Manager at the housing and homelessness charity, Shelter, told the Committee that it provides “opportunities to deliver far more social rent homes than might be possible on other forms of development”.⁴⁴ Charlie Berry explained that this is because such schemes can be publicly led and driven by demand with an “almost limitless need for social homes” allowing new towns to build at pace.⁴⁵ She contrasted this with “private-led models”, which we heard have often “struggled to build out as quickly because you are reliant on private demand.”⁴⁶ As part of this, Charlie Berry highlighted that Community Land Trusts could be a big part of the housing development mix, capable of delivering high levels of social and affordable housing.⁴⁷ Guests also emphasised that new towns offer a strategic opportunity to plan for the “right” types of housing from the outset, including family-sized homes, accessible and adaptable housing, and a mix of tenures to meet changing demographic needs over time. London Legacy Development Corporation (LLDC), told us that London’s new towns should be designed to “respond to the evolving needs of both people and place over the long-term” which could include “a diverse mix of housing tenures, delivering homes that cater to a range of household sizes and life stages to meet housing needs.”⁴⁸

⁴³ Figure created by London Assembly Scrutiny officers using data from: Town and Country Planning Association, [TCPA New Towns Network](#) and Office for National Statistics, [2021 Census](#) [both accessed January 2026]. This was based on housing tenure data from the ‘built up area’ of each original new town location.

⁴⁴ London Assembly Planning and Regeneration Committee, [New Towns for London - Part 1 – Panel One](#), 28 January 2026, p.1

⁴⁵ London Assembly Planning and Regeneration Committee, [New Towns for London - Part 1 – Panel One](#), 28 January 2026, p.4

⁴⁶ London Assembly Planning and Regeneration Committee, [New Towns for London - Part 1 – Panel One](#), 28 January 2026, p.4

⁴⁷ London Assembly Planning and Regeneration Committee, [New Towns for London - Part 1 – Panel One](#), 28 January 2026, p.14

⁴⁸ London Assembly Planning and Regeneration Committee, [Call for Evidence – New Towns for London](#), March 2026, London Legacy Development Corporation Ref No. NT010, p.117

We heard a divergence of views on what the tenure mix should be in a new town in London: while some argued for very high or 100 per cent affordable housing, others stressed the importance of mixed communities, with international examples suggesting that a balanced proportion of social and private housing can support social integration. For example, in evidence to the Committee, the community group Action for Enfield's Future stated:

"Housing on publicly owned land should be 100% affordable, with at least 50% Social Rent, because this is the quickest and most direct way to meet London's housing needs, including assisting households living in temporary accommodation and concealed households/first-time buyers."⁴⁹

In contrast, Guy Courtois, Founder of the French think tank, Pour Une Renaissance Urbaine, who has worked on the delivery of new towns in France said that French new towns are typically delivered with a target of 30 per cent social housing. Guy argued that this is to ensure there is a real mix of people from different backgrounds living together:

"We do 30 per cent and the way we do it is we build two private buildings and then one social housing and then two private and then one social housing. Doing it this way is very effective because we have real social mixity. The kids going down from their buildings are playing together on the same green field, and they are going to the same school."⁵⁰

In this context, the Committee sought to understand how affordability and tenure mix would be approached in London's proposed new town sites. While both sites are at an early stage, we heard from Kate Greenaway from Peabody, which is part of the Thamesmead Waterfront Joint Venture (JV), that the ambition of the JV is to deliver "as much affordable housing as possible".⁵¹ Similarly, Brett Leahy highlighted that Enfield views new towns as an opportunity to meet strategic housing needs, including the provision of more family-sized homes.⁵² Deputy Mayor Tom Copley also emphasised that London faces shortages across all tenures, and so he wants "to maximise the level of affordable [homes] while making sure we are delivering a diverse range of tenures."⁵³

These ambitions are welcome, but remain vague at this stage. Success for new towns will ultimately depend on how effectively they are put into practice. To do so, we believe that the provision of affordable housing should be a key consideration in any new towns for London. Whilst there are advantages to providing a range of affordable housing as well as housing to

⁴⁹ London Assembly Planning and Regeneration Committee, [Call for Evidence – New Towns for London](#), March 2026, Action for Enfield's Future Ref No. NT001, p.9

⁵⁰ London Assembly Planning and Regeneration Committee, [New Towns for London - Part 1 – Panel Two](#), 28 January 2026, p.18

⁵¹ London Assembly Planning and Regeneration Committee, [New Towns for London - Part 2 – Panel One](#), 11 February 2026, p.20

⁵² London Assembly Planning and Regeneration Committee, [New Towns for London - Part 2 – Panel Two](#), 11 February 2026, p.8

⁵³ London Assembly Planning and Regeneration Committee, [New Towns for London - Part 2 – Panel Two](#), 11 February 2026, p.12

buy and rent, an ambition of these developments should be to help reduce waiting lists for social homes, which in London stands at 341,421 households.⁵⁴ New towns in London must focus on the tenures that Londoners need the most, which is social housing, as well as the types of homes in highest demand – accessible and family sized homes.

Transport

“New towns should connect people to skills, jobs, services and amenities. This should include high-quality public transport, walking and cycling networks within each town and convenient connections into wider transport networks.”⁵⁵

New Towns Taskforce - Transport connectivity Placemaking Principle

Good transport links are important to ensure new towns are integrated into London. New town residents need to be able to easily get to work, school, shops and places of leisure.

The proposed new towns in London will require transport upgrades to unlock their full potential. As we heard from Kane Emerson, Head of Housing Research at the campaign group YIMBY Alliance, if we want new towns to be full of resilient communities, “then it is of the utmost importance to make sure that they are connected via public transport to other places in London.”⁵⁶ He added that a key measure of success to judge new towns on will be how quickly new town residents can commute to a place of work or centres of employment.⁵⁷

We heard persuasive evidence that this means building the infrastructure first, from the very beginning of development.⁵⁸ As Guy Courtois, Founder, Pour Une Renaissance Urbaine, told the Committee, in France’s new towns “we always build the transport before the city itself, or the district, because it is very difficult to make it a success and to sell apartments if there is no good transportation.”⁵⁹

There are risks that this could not be the case for London’s new towns, despite TfL putting forward proposals. At Crews Hill and Chase Park, a higher frequency rail service will be required at Crews Hill train station, to support a new town.⁶⁰ This would need to be in place by mid-2027, which is when Brett Leahy said the first homes at the site could be delivered.⁶¹ TfL

⁵⁴ Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, [Live tables on rents, lettings and tenancies](#), Table 600, 4 December 2025

⁵⁵ New Towns Taskforce, [Report to Government](#), September 2025

⁵⁶ London Assembly Planning and Regeneration Committee, [New Towns for London - Part 1 – Panel One](#), 28 January 2026, p.24

⁵⁷ London Assembly Planning and Regeneration Committee, [New Towns for London - Part 1 – Panel One](#), 28 January 2026, p.4

⁵⁸ London Assembly Planning and Regeneration Committee, [New Towns for London - Part 1 – Panel One](#), 28 January 2026, p.5, p.15, p.24; and [New Towns for London - Part 1 – Panel Two](#), 11 February 2026, p.6, p.7, p.10

⁵⁹ London Assembly Planning and Regeneration Committee, [New Towns for London - Part 1 – Panel Two](#), 28 January 2026, p.9

⁶⁰ New Towns Taskforce, [Report to Government](#), September 2025, p.38-39

⁶¹ London Assembly Planning and Regeneration Committee, [New Towns for London - Part 2 – Panel Two](#), 11 February 2026, p.5

submitted a proposal to the Government outlining its plans to take over, and increase, the service running through Crews Hill Station in September 2025.⁶² The Government is yet to respond to TfL's proposal, but has confirmed that it is in discussion with the Mayor to bring the service under TfL control.⁶³ However, the longer the Government delays formal devolution of the service, the greater the risk that a high frequency rail service will not be in place for new town residents at Crews Hill and Chase Park.

At Thamesmead Waterfront, TfL will be extending the DLR from Gallions Reach on the north of the River Thames to Thamesmead via Beckton Riverside, which is a strong supporting element of the new town proposal.⁶⁴ However, Kate Greenaway from Peabody told us that, dependent on planning, there will be initial residents living at Thamesmead Waterfront before the DLR extension is open, and that "People move in knowing that you are going to have a station there".⁶⁵ This was echoed by Deputy Mayor Tom Copley, who said that "People will move with the promise."⁶⁶

London has a history of missed deadlines and delays when it comes to major transport infrastructure projects. This includes the Elizabeth Line, which was delivered four years after its original deadline.⁶⁷ Or, the new development at Beam Park, which started receiving residents in 2020 and has provided over 1,000 new homes, but has only just received funding for a train station in 2026, leaving residents reliant on local buses all this time.^{68 69 70} This is what the new towns in London need to avoid.

Furthermore, existing Thamesmead residents have already endured the frustration of unfulfilled transport promises.⁷¹ As we heard from Kate Greenaway:

"Thamesmead Waterfront itself was a part of the original masterplan for Thamesmead, linking with the existing town centre, but it did not come forward as a scheme because the transport infrastructure that was promised was never delivered."⁷²

The lack of transport options at Thamesmead was obvious to the Committee when we visited the area in January 2026, as part of this investigation. We were required to take a 10-minute

⁶² TfL, [Outline Business Case: Devolution of Great Northern Inners \(GNI\) Services](#), September 2025

⁶³ HM Government, [PM meets mayors in drive to get Britain building and take on blockers](#), 3 June 2026

⁶⁴ New Towns Taskforce, [Report to Government](#), September 2025; and HM Treasury, [Budget 2025](#), 28 November 2025

⁶⁵ London Assembly Planning and Regeneration Committee, [New Towns for London - Part 2 - Panel One](#), 11 February 2026, p.12

⁶⁶ London Assembly Planning and Regeneration Committee, [New Towns for London - Part 2 - Panel Two](#), 11 February 2026, p.10

⁶⁷ The Elizabeth Line was originally planned to open in 2018, but did not open until 2022. See: The Guardian, [Crossrail: much-delayed Elizabeth line to open on 24 May](#), 4 May 2022

⁶⁸ Beam Park London, [Beam Park](#), [accessed May 2026]

⁶⁹ Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, [Emergency action to kickstart London housebuilding](#), 25 March 2026

⁷⁰ MyLondon, [Angry East Londoners 'stuck' in £550k homes 'forced to change work hours' as promised train station 'not built in time'](#), 17 August 2023

⁷¹ Londonist, [Thamesmead: Why No Train Station, And Is That DLR Extension Happening?](#), 13 December 2022

⁷² London Assembly Planning and Regeneration Committee, [New Towns for London - Part 2 - Panel One](#), 11 February 2026, p.15

private bus ride from Abbey Wood, the closest rail station, crossing large roundabouts and heavily car-dominated roads. This highlighted just how isolated and pedestrian-unfriendly the area currently is.

The post-war new towns have been criticised for their poor public transport provision, and this must be borne in mind when reflecting on London's history of delayed transport delivery. We heard from Kane Emerson who highlighted the example of the Skelmersdale new town, where the closure of the town's train station in the 1960s left it disconnected from major employment centres, embedding long-term unemployment and social challenges.⁷³ We also heard from Susan Parham, Associate Professor, University of Hertfordshire that some of the post-war new towns were low-density or "spread out" meaning many residents became reliant on their cars.⁷⁴ This can still be seen today, where most post-war new towns have slightly higher levels of car ownership when compared to the England-average.⁷⁵ Any new towns built in London cannot be built on the promise of expanded infrastructure later.

There is a chance here to ensure the missteps from the past are not repeated. Building a new town within a city like London provides an opportunity to take advantage of and expand the existing transport infrastructure but it is clear that this transport expansion must be in place before the arrival of any new town residents.

Green infrastructure

*"New towns should be designed and delivered to embrace environmental principles, with buildings and neighbourhoods that are low carbon, climate resilient and which help to protect, restore and enhance biodiversity."*⁷⁶

New Towns Taskforce – Environmental sustainability Placemaking Principle

Climate resilient places can be created by utilising green infrastructure, such as trees, plants, gardens, parks, woodlands and other green spaces.⁷⁷ Yet, much of the evidence we heard regarding green infrastructure and climate resilience also emphasised the risk of building on the Green Belt at the Crews Hill and Chase Park site.

⁷³ London Assembly Planning and Regeneration Committee, [New Towns for London - Part 1 – Panel One](#), 28 January 2026, pp.3-4

⁷⁴ London Assembly Planning and Regeneration Committee, [New Towns for London - Part 1 – Panel Two](#), 28 January 2026, p.2

⁷⁵ Analysis by London Assembly Scrutiny team based on data from: Town and Country Planning Association, [TCPA New Towns Network](#) and Office for National Statistics, [2021 Census](#) [both accessed 7 January 2026]

⁷⁶ New Towns Taskforce, [Report to Government](#), September 2025

⁷⁷ TCPA, [Factsheet: Green infrastructure and climate change](#), [accessed March 2026]

Action for Enfield's Future told us that most of the land identified at Crews Hill and Chase Park is greenfield, i.e., land that has not been built on before.^{78 79} The group stated that building on this area could alter the character of Enfield's historic landscape, remove productive farmland and increase pressure on water systems, as well as reducing carbon sequestration, which is the removal of carbon via trees and plants.^{80 81}

We also heard from the Environment Agency that development at Crews Hill and Chase Park will increase localised warming within London, known as the urban heat island effect.⁸² This is because materials such as roads and buildings absorb and retain far more heat than natural surfaces such as trees and grass.⁸³

The risk of flooding at Thamesmead Waterfront was also raised to the Committee by The Campaign to Protect Rural England (CPRE), which stated that the risk will only increase with climate change.⁸⁴ CPRE also explained that whilst Thamesmead is theoretically brownfield, the site has been rewilded and is now a green space, and that development will "certainly deliver" a net loss of biodiversity.⁸⁵

Some guests provided evidence on how the environmental impacts of building on Green Belt land could potentially be mitigated. Action for Enfield's Future explained that if the Crews Hill and Chase Park proposal proceeds, it will need assurances including mapped boundaries, an outline-stage strategy with enforceable standards, long-term monitoring and "stop/go" triggers.⁸⁶ We heard that this type of environmental strategy should result in no net loss of meaningful countryside and provision of green infrastructure that "genuinely improves flood and overheating resilience."⁸⁷ The group explained that this could be achieved by ensuring "rivers, woodland, ecological corridors and parks structural elements, [are] delivered early, and designed for climate resilience and biodiversity recovery."⁸⁸ Similarly, LLDC called for "nature and biodiversity [to be] woven into the fabric of new developments, supported by interconnected green corridors that help them grow and thrive."⁸⁹

⁷⁸ London Assembly Planning and Regeneration Committee, [Call for Evidence – New Towns for London](#), March 2026, Action for Enfield's Future Ref No. NT001, p.6

⁷⁹ RSPB, [Greenfield vs brownfield land](#), 2 July 2025

⁸⁰ London Assembly Planning and Regeneration Committee, [Call for Evidence – New Towns for London](#), March 2026, Action for Enfield's Future Ref No. NT001, p.11

⁸¹ JNCC, [Removal of greenhouse gases by UK forests](#), 2025

⁸² London Assembly Planning and Regeneration Committee, [Call for Evidence – New Towns for London](#), March 2026, Environment Agency Ref No. NT007, p.100

⁸³ UKGBC, [How the urban heat island effect makes cities vulnerable to climate change](#), [accessed March 2026]

⁸⁴ London Assembly Planning and Regeneration Committee, [Call for Evidence – New Towns for London](#), March 2026, CPRE Ref No. NT006, p.90

⁸⁵ London Assembly Planning and Regeneration Committee, [Call for Evidence – New Towns for London](#), March 2026, CPRE Ref No. NT006, p.90

⁸⁶ London Assembly Planning and Regeneration Committee, [Call for Evidence – New Towns for London](#), March 2026, Action for Enfield's Future Ref No. NT001, p.11

⁸⁷ London Assembly Planning and Regeneration Committee, [Call for Evidence – New Towns for London](#), March 2026, Action for Enfield's Future Ref No. NT001, p.11

⁸⁸ London Assembly Planning and Regeneration Committee, [Call for Evidence – New Towns for London](#), March 2026, Action for Enfield's Future Ref No. NT001, p.30

⁸⁹ London Assembly Planning and Regeneration Committee, [Call for Evidence – New Towns for London](#), March 2026, London Legacy Development Corporation Ref No. NT010, p.118

Some evidence to the Committee also emphasised the opportunities new towns bring to implement an environmental strategy. LLDC told us that “New town development in London could present a significant opportunity to strengthen environmental resilience and enhance green infrastructure through strategic planning.”⁹⁰ It stated this can be achieved by providing: “green corridors, flood-resilient landscaping and generous open spaces [that] have been designed to manage surface water, mitigate overheating, enhance biodiversity and support long-term ecological health.”⁹¹

Likewise, the Environment Agency stated that there may be opportunities to mitigate the urban heat island effect through strategically planned green space, and pointed to the London Green Infrastructure Framework and London Local Nature Recovery Strategy as tools to be used to inform the development of new towns.⁹² The Thamesmead Waterfront JV also explained that masterplanning and developing a new town allows for intentional and large-scale green spaces to be built-in to a development, and that this is crucial delivering high-quality placemaking.⁹³

Community engagement

“New towns should establish clear and effective ways to engage the local community in shaping the vision and proposals for their town and empower residents to build social capital and help define the town’s cultural identity.”⁹⁴

New Towns Taskforce – Community engagement Placemaking Principle

Much of the delivery of new towns will not be possible without community engagement. Crucially, the people who are going to live in new towns need to be able to say what these places look like. Through this investigation, the Committee heard that there are several factors that will guarantee that decisions and design principles are guided by new town residents.

We heard that decision makers must be driven by the public. Sowmya Parthasarathy from the New Towns Taskforce, told us that current public engagement is “more of a top-down enterprise, consultations with GLA and councils rather than people in those areas”.⁹⁵ This was echoed by Better Homes Enfield, who stated that instead of a top-down vision statement,

⁹⁰ London Assembly Planning and Regeneration Committee, [Call for Evidence – New Towns for London](#), March 2026, London Legacy Development Corporation Ref No. NT010, p.118

⁹¹ London Assembly Planning and Regeneration Committee, [Call for Evidence – New Towns for London](#), March 2026, London Legacy Development Corporation Ref No. NT010, p.119

⁹² London Assembly Planning and Regeneration Committee, [Call for Evidence – New Towns for London](#), March 2026, Environment Agency Ref No. NT007, p.95 and p.101

⁹³ London Assembly Planning and Regeneration Committee, [Call for Evidence – New Towns for London](#), March 2026, Thamesmead Waterfront JV Ref No. NT013, p.137

⁹⁴ New Towns Taskforce, [Report to Government](#), September 2025

⁹⁵ London Assembly Planning and Regeneration Committee, [New Towns for London - Part 2 – Panel One](#), 11 February 2026, p.18

decision makers should start at a grass-roots level and ask “the most important question: what places do people like and why, then how do we build more of that.”⁹⁶

The Committee was also told that decision makers need to ask these questions to everyone who might live in a new town. We heard repeatedly that this should involve existing communities surrounding the potential new town sites, as well as those who will move into new towns once they are established. As Sowmya Parthasarathy stated, decision makers must “figure out what would be acceptable to local people, what would be attractive to new people, and how might they be able to coexist and create this new place.”⁹⁷

There are several benefits to this approach. Action for Enfield’s Future told us that engaging with existing communities builds trust by showing plans are genuinely open for influence; it protects and improves what is already enjoyed and it reduces the risk of long-running conflict.⁹⁸ For future residents, it ensures the town is designed around real needs, such as play space, GP capacity, youth provision, and an inclusive public realm.⁹⁹ It also brings benefits to the decision makers, by identifying issues early, harnessing local knowledge that professionals often miss, and ‘designs out’ avoidable mistakes.¹⁰⁰

We also heard that engagement should be conducted early on and in a meaningful way to make a difference. Arup explained that public engagement must happen before key strategic parameters are fixed to create a deeper sense of localism and partnership.¹⁰¹ Better Homes Enfield also stated that genuine engagement requires trust, which depends on honest and accessible evidence.¹⁰² The group explained that for this to happen, there needs to be minimum standards for engagement, including accessible explainers of key information, clear governance and timetables for consultation exercises and a published “what we heard / what we changed” log after each stage.¹⁰³ We also heard from Susan Parham, Associate Professor, University of Hertfordshire and Better Homes Enfield that one way to achieve this could be through ‘charrettes’ which are an engagement method specifically used to resolve conflicts or trade-offs between stakeholder groups.^{104 105}

⁹⁶ London Assembly Planning and Regeneration Committee, [Call for Evidence – New Towns for London](#), March 2026, Better Homes Enfield Ref No. NT004, p.74

⁹⁷ London Assembly Planning and Regeneration Committee, [New Towns for London - Part 2 – Panel One](#), 11 February 2026, p.19

⁹⁸ London Assembly Planning and Regeneration Committee, [Call for Evidence – New Towns for London](#), March 2026, Action for Enfield’s Future Ref No. NT001, p.14

⁹⁹ London Assembly Planning and Regeneration Committee, [Call for Evidence – New Towns for London](#), March 2026, Action for Enfield’s Future Ref No. NT001, p.14

¹⁰⁰ London Assembly Planning and Regeneration Committee, [Call for Evidence – New Towns for London](#), March 2026, Action for Enfield’s Future Ref No. NT001, p.14

¹⁰¹ London Assembly Planning and Regeneration Committee, [Call for Evidence – New Towns for London](#), March 2026, Arup Ref No. NT003, p.63

¹⁰² London Assembly Planning and Regeneration Committee, [Call for Evidence – New Towns for London](#), March 2026, Better Homes Enfield Ref No. NT004, p.69

¹⁰³ London Assembly Planning and Regeneration Committee, [Call for Evidence – New Towns for London](#), March 2026, Better Homes Enfield Ref No. NT004, p.70

¹⁰⁴ London Assembly Planning and Regeneration Committee, [Call for Evidence – New Towns for London](#), March 2026, Better Homes Enfield Ref No. NT004, p.69

¹⁰⁵ London Assembly Planning and Regeneration Committee, [New Towns for London - Part 1 – Panel Two](#), 28 January 2026, p.17

We note that the Thamesmead Waterfront JV echo many of these engagement principles in its stated vision for Thamesmead Waterfront. The group told us that “community engagement on a new town scale should start with understanding the needs and wants of the existing community.”¹⁰⁶ It also stated that strategies should be “co-designed with the community, for all elements of placemaking (including arts and culture, landscape improvements, and other key social infrastructure)” at the earliest stages of developing a new town.¹⁰⁷

Likewise, Brett Leahy explained that the plan for Crews Hill and Chase Park is based on Enfield’s Local Plan which has undergone two borough-wide consultations as well as two statutory consultations.¹⁰⁸

The Mayor is uniquely placed to convene voices from across London, bringing together current residents, prospective future communities, and wider stakeholders to reflect the pan-London significance of new towns. We would therefore expect to see the Mayor establish clear policies and standards for community engagement and coproduction on new towns that ensure it is robust, inclusive and consistently applied across all new town developments. These standards should require that engagement should be continuous, beginning from the point at which a new town is designated, continuing through its development, and evolving after it is established, with regular reassessment to ensure communities remain at the heart of its growth.

Conditions for London’s new towns

The Mayor has indicated that he intends to show leadership in the design of London’s new towns. In response to a Mayor’s Question in March 2026, he said:

“It is my view that high-quality design is fundamental to delivering good growth and inclusive neighbourhoods that improve quality of life for all Londoners. Whilst proposals for the potential London new towns are still at an early stage, should they be designated by the Government I will look to ensure the development proposals can be shaped accordingly.”¹⁰⁹

As the Mayor looks to shape any new town development proposals, he should make a commitment to ensure affordable housing, transport infrastructure, green infrastructure and community engagement are delivered accordingly. This should be accompanied by a masterplan that ensures a long-term vision of each new town is brought forward and maintained. Together, these steps should be in place to ensure new towns provide the greatest possible benefits for London.

¹⁰⁶ London Assembly Planning and Regeneration Committee, [Call for Evidence – New Towns for London](#), March 2026, Thamesmead Waterfront JV Ref No. NT013, p.133

¹⁰⁷ London Assembly Planning and Regeneration Committee, [Call for Evidence – New Towns for London](#), March 2026, Thamesmead Waterfront JV Ref No. NT013, p.133

¹⁰⁸ London Assembly Planning and Regeneration Committee, [New Towns for London - Part 2 – Panel Two](#), 11 February 2026, p.4

¹⁰⁹ The Mayor of London, [MQ 2026/1393 - Lessons From Poundbury for New Town Delivery](#), 27 March 2026

Recommendation 1

The Mayor should ensure the following conditions are met by any new town development proposal:

- the optimal amount of affordable housing is provided, with social housing being a priority in terms of tenure;
- the types of affordable, social and market houses provided account for sufficient delivery of family-sized and accessible homes;
- all transport infrastructure is in place from day one of residents moving in;
- it comes with a strategy to provide high quality green infrastructure that improves climate resilience, biodiversity and access to nature;
- it is co-designed in a meaningful way with current and future residents, with robust and timely public consultation and clear evidence of how this informed all design and planning decisions.

Recommendation 2

The Mayor should ensure that each new town is underpinned by a clear, place-specific set of design principles and a coherent masterplan, developed at an early stage and co-designed with communities, to support high-quality architecture, public realm, placemaking and long-term stewardship.

EMBARCADERO

Governance and stewardship of new towns

Historically, new towns have been delivered at a much faster pace than surrounding developments because of their governance structure - New Town Development Corporations.¹¹⁰ Established under the New Towns Act 1946, New Town Development Corporations were granted extensive powers to acquire land early, exercise planning control, and access government loans; enabling them to “do all that was necessary” to bring new towns into being.¹¹¹

While the New Towns Taskforce recommended that the Government set up a Development Corporation to oversee the delivery of each new town it designates,¹¹² the evidence we heard has emphasised the need for a tailored approach in London.¹¹³ This point was made particularly strongly for the Thamesmead site given the existing governance structures already in place via the Joint Venture meaning a new Development Corporation may not be necessary, but should still be explored.¹¹⁴

We were therefore pleased when the Government confirmed it would be taking a tailored approach to governance as part of its *New Towns Draft Programme*.¹¹⁵ Here, the Government stated it would provide advice and support to “establish the right vehicle for each place”, which could include Development Corporations where appropriate, or a Joint Venture in the case of Thamesmead Waterfront.¹¹⁶

However, given the scale of new towns, we believe that as the Government decides the right vehicle for each place, it could consider the role the Mayor plays in whichever governance structure is chosen for any new town in London. As the GLA told us, the Mayor has “strong powers over housing, planning, transport, energy” alongside a “broad range of statutory, financial and strategic powers” which provide opportunities to de-risk and accelerate the delivery of new towns in London.¹¹⁷

We also heard of the need to consider who the long-term stewards of new towns will be. As John Walker, former Deputy Chief Executive at the Milton Keynes Development Corporation put it, “you need to know who you are handing over to” and that this is particularly important

¹¹⁰ London Assembly Planning and Regeneration Committee, [New Towns for London - Part 1 – Panel Two](#), 28 January 2026, p.4

¹¹¹ Town and Country Planning Association, [New Towns and Garden Cities – Lessons for Tomorrow. Stage 1: An Introduction to the UK’s New Towns and Garden Cities](#), December 2014

¹¹² New Towns Taskforce, [Report to Government](#), September 2025

¹¹³ London Assembly Planning and Regeneration Committee, [Call for Evidence – New Towns for London](#), March 2026, BusinessLDN Ref No. NT005, p.87

¹¹⁴ London Assembly Planning and Regeneration Committee, [New Towns for London - Part 2 – Panel One](#), 11 February 2026, p.7

¹¹⁵ Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, [New Towns Draft Programme](#), 23 March 2026

¹¹⁶ Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, [New Towns Draft Programme](#), 23 March 2026

¹¹⁷ London Assembly Planning and Regeneration Committee, [Call for Evidence – New Towns for London](#), March 2026, Greater London Authority Ref No. NT008, p.102

when it comes to the assets and facilities that are put in a new town.¹¹⁸ John explained that when it is clear who the stewards of a new town are they can take a long-term view of running the new town, and feed this into early designs to avoid future mistakes.

Deputy Mayor Tom Copley highlighted the example of LLDC, a Mayoral Development Corporation that is now starting to hand over stewardship arrangements to local boroughs, suggesting that this would be the model also used for new towns.¹¹⁹ Louise Duggan from the GLA, referred to this as the “sunset phase” of a new town:

“we are always anticipating the sunset phase, which is, “Back to you guys.” We do not want to be handing them [local boroughs] a liability back, and they do not want to be receiving a liability back. Their engagement over that time will be - would be, will be - integral to making sure that that long-term stewardship is priced into everything that we are doing and the decisions we are making.”¹²⁰

¹¹⁸ London Assembly Planning and Regeneration Committee, [New Towns for London - Part 1 – Panel Two](#), 28 January 2026, p.13

¹¹⁹ London Assembly Planning and Regeneration Committee, [New Towns for London - Part 2 – Panel Two](#), 11 February 2026, p.25

¹²⁰ London Assembly Planning and Regeneration Committee, [New Towns for London - Part 2 – Panel Two](#), 11 February 2026, p.25

Financing new towns

Government funding

The post-war new towns were primarily financed through fixed-rate loans from the Treasury, amounting to £4.75 billion, which were expected to be paid back with interest over 60 years.^{121,122} The majority of these loans were paid back by the New Town Development Corporations within 20 years.¹²³

Dr Thomas Aubrey told the Committee that these post-war new town loans were “funded by increased gilt issuance”,¹²⁴ i.e., government borrowing from investors via the financial markets, considered as government debt.¹²⁵ However, he warned that if the next generation of new towns were financed this way “we would have major issues” as investors may demand higher interest rates, which would increase the cost of government borrowing.¹²⁶

As an alternative model, Dr Thomas Aubrey suggested that New Town Development Corporations could issue debt that would be paid back by market sources so that this borrowing can be considered “off-balance sheet for the fiscal rules.”¹²⁷ This derisks projects as they will not negatively affect the public finances, and instead have long-term investment directly from the capital market, allowing for faster delivery of infrastructure.^{128 129}

Dr Thomas Aubrey explained that this mechanism has already been tried and tested in other countries and that the “UK has deviated from internationally recognised accounting standards” which has restrained “profitable projects to get off the ground”.¹³⁰

Presently, there is uncertainty as to the scale and scope of Government funding that will be made available to new towns, or where that money would come from. The Government has indicated that it intends to support each location with “resource and capital funding”.¹³¹ Yet, earlier Government statements indicated there will be “no New Towns funding pot but the New Towns programme will be delivered with a combination of our existing grant funding pots.”¹³²

We heard that new towns need funding to ensure their success. As BusinessLDN told us:

¹²¹ TCPA, [A fourth generation of New Towns – focusing on delivery](#), 16 October 2025

¹²² TCPA, [celebrating 70 years of the new towns act](#), January 2017

¹²³ TCPA, [A fourth generation of New Towns – focusing on delivery](#), 16 October 2025

¹²⁴ London Assembly Planning and Regeneration Committee, [New Towns for London - Part 1 – Panel One](#), 28 January 2026, p.10

¹²⁵ House of Commons Library, [What are gilts? A simple guide](#), 18 December 2024

¹²⁶ London Assembly Planning and Regeneration Committee, [New Towns for London - Part 1 – Panel One](#), 28 January 2026, p.10

¹²⁷ London Assembly Planning and Regeneration Committee, [New Towns for London - Part 1 – Panel One](#), 28 January 2026, p.10

¹²⁸ The House of Commons Housing, Communities and Local Government Committee, [Written evidence submitted by Dr Thomas Aubrey \[HLV 007\]](#), February 2025

¹²⁹ Bennet Institute for Public Policy, [Townscapes](#), September 2024

¹³⁰ London Assembly Planning and Regeneration Committee, [New Towns for London - Part 1 – Panel One](#), 28 January 2026, p.10

¹³¹ Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, [New Towns Draft Programme](#), 23 March 2026

¹³² Commons Select Committee - Housing, Communities and Local Government Committee, [Oral evidence: New Towns](#), 13 January 2026

“Providing grant, soft loans or other types of financial support is the most obvious role that Government is best placed to play, and it must do so otherwise it runs the risk of undermining the new towns designation.”¹³³

We also heard that this funding must come in addition to, not as a substitution for, prior commitments of investments. In evidence to the Committee, the GLA emphasised the importance of “fair funding for London”. Louise Duggan told us that the GLA should not be expected to meet the costs of new towns “within existing budgets” and that it will “[advocate] for the funding that is required to unlock the ambition in terms of quality, in terms of viability, in terms of affordability, in terms of sustainability.”¹³⁴

Recommendation 3

As the Government progresses with new town designation, it should also announce a ‘New Towns Funding Grant’. This must be a new source of funding that does not draw on grants that have already been allocated to different government departments.

Land value

In addition to government grants, borrowing and significant public ownership that are required to make any new town project work, there are fiscal powers relating to land value that the Government could use to help lower the costs of new towns.

Disapplying hope value

Hope value is the value land could *potentially* be worth in the future, after it has been developed, which is usually higher in value than what it would be worth on the open market before it is developed on.¹³⁵

When a piece of land is bought compulsorily, i.e., without agreement from the landowner,¹³⁶ at market value, said landowner can claim compensation for the hope value of the land.¹³⁷

The Levelling-up and Regeneration Act 2023 allows acquiring authorities to disapply hope value when provision of affordable or social housing is being facilitated.¹³⁸ This applies to several authority bodies, including the GLA, local authorities, Mayoral Development Corporations, and New Town Development Corporations. However, we heard from Charlie Berry that although disapplying hope value “has been on the statute book for a couple of years” it has not been used.¹³⁹ She also explained that:

¹³³ London Assembly Planning and Regeneration Committee, [Call for Evidence – New Towns for London](#), March 2026, BusinessLDN Ref No. NT005, p.87

¹³⁴ London Assembly Planning and Regeneration Committee, [New Towns for London - Part 2 – Panel Two](#), 11 February 2026, p.21

¹³⁵ Designing Buildings, [Difference between existing use value and market value](#), 23 October 2020

¹³⁶ RICS, [Compulsory purchase](#), [accessed June 2026]

¹³⁷ [Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, Compulsory purchase compensation: Power to remove hope value](#), 3 October 2024

¹³⁸ [Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, Compulsory purchase compensation: Power to remove hope value](#), 3 October 2024

¹³⁹ London Assembly Planning and Regeneration Committee, [New Towns for London - Part 1 – Panel One](#), 28 January 2026, p.24

“New Towns are a very good opportunity to make sure that beds in within our land market, and that will have repercussions and positive effects for the viability of social rent delivery that go well beyond New Towns themselves”.¹⁴⁰

Raising funding from land values

Land value capture is the term used for harnessing any uplift in value that can be made from developing on an area of land.¹⁴¹ For example, when transport infrastructure is put in at an area, this makes it a more accessible and therefore desirable place to live than it was originally. Thus, the value of the land increases. Land value capture will be important to ensure increases in private land values are recouped for public benefit.

The better the infrastructure is, the more land values will increase. If land is publicly owned, the resultant increases in land value will be retained by the public. Land value capture mechanisms attempt to retrieve value accrued by private landowners and developers.

“Quality supports value creation, which in turn supports value capture to fund public realm and facilities. This is not an argument for “ornament at any cost”; it is an argument that a durable urban form and contextual architecture pay back through lower friction and stronger long-term performance.”¹⁴²

Pour une Renaissance Urbaine

The Government has stated that “one of the key areas of work for the government’s new towns programme will be to explore different mechanisms for capturing land value”.¹⁴³ Evidence received by the Committee was in support of exploring land value capture methods, as L&Q told us, new towns offer the potential for stronger land value capture that existing planning tools do not.¹⁴⁴ We heard from Charlie Berry that there are a range of measures that a new town could explore in terms of financing, “For example, you could look at split rate, you could look at land value taxation, you could look at proportional property tax, [and] fairer ways to finance those New Towns.”¹⁴⁵

One proposal for new land value capture methods, put forward by BusinessLDN, suggests adapting the Tax Increment Finance (TIF) model.¹⁴⁶ Currently, TIF allows funds to be borrowed

¹⁴⁰ London Assembly Planning and Regeneration Committee, [New Towns for London - Part 1 – Panel One](#), 28 January 2026, p.24

¹⁴¹ Housing, Communities and Local Government Committee, [Delivering 1.5 million new homes: Land Value Capture](#), 28 October 2025

¹⁴² London Assembly Planning and Regeneration Committee, [Call for Evidence – New Towns for London](#), March 2026, Pour une Renaissance Urbaine Ref No. NT011, p.122

¹⁴³ Housing, Communities and Local Government Committee, [Written evidence submitted by the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government](#), March 2025

¹⁴⁴ London Assembly Planning and Regeneration Committee, [Call for Evidence – New Towns for London](#), March 2026, L&Q Ref No. NT009, p.110

¹⁴⁵ London Assembly Planning and Regeneration Committee, [New Towns for London - Part 1 – Panel One](#), 28 January 2026, p.9

¹⁴⁶ London Assembly Planning and Regeneration Committee, [Call for Evidence – New Towns for London](#), March 2026, BusinessLDN Ref No.NT005, p.85

upfront to deliver new infrastructure projects, with the expectation that this investment will lead to increased property values and economic activity.¹⁴⁷ The additional tax revenues generated – typically from business rates or property-based taxes – are then used to repay the borrowed funds over a fixed period.¹⁴⁸ For example, the Northern Line Extension was partly financed through the TIF model by capturing the incremental business rates revenue generated and retained within the enterprise zone around Battersea Station.¹⁴⁹

BusinessLDN has proposed extending the TIF model to allow for revenue to be captured from residential property taxes, in what it refers to as a residential, or ‘resi’-TIF model.¹⁵⁰ Through this, BusinessLDN suggests that when new transport infrastructure is built and new homes are developed as a consequence, a proportion of the resulting Stamp Duty Land Tax and council tax should be ringfenced to pay back the upfront costs of the transport infrastructure.¹⁵¹

Following our meeting with Deputy Mayor Tom Copley, he wrote to the Committee confirming that the Mayor “supports the deployment of more Tax Increment Finance (TIF) zones, seeing them as critical to funding essential transport infrastructure needed to unlock new towns and progress growth ambitions.”¹⁵² We were also informed that the Mayor is keen to explore Stamp Duty Land Tax as one source of resi-TIF income alongside other options.¹⁵³

However, the Mayor would need increased fiscal powers if he were to implement BusinessLDN’s proposal of the resi-TIF model.¹⁵⁴ Deputy Mayor Tom Copley told the Committee that the Mayor does not currently have the powers to independently establish TIF zones.¹⁵⁵ Furthermore, primary legislation would be needed to devolve the power to retain a proportion of Stamp Duty Land Tax generated by new development linked to new transport infrastructure.¹⁵⁶

This was echoed by Kane Emerson, Head of Housing Research, YIMBY Alliance, who noted how land value capture methods had previously been used to finance transport infrastructure in London before, such as the TIF model used for the Northern Line Extension or the Mayoral Community Infrastructure Levy used for the creation of the Elizabeth Line.^{157 158} However, Kane

¹⁴⁷ GLA Oversight Committee, [Trusting London to deliver: our place in the Government’s devolution reforms](#), September 2025, p.40

¹⁴⁸ GLA Oversight Committee, [Trusting London to deliver: our place in the Government’s devolution reforms](#), September 2025, p.40

¹⁴⁹ BusinessLDN, [Generating Land Value to Grow London](#), January 2025, p.6

¹⁵⁰ London Assembly Planning and Regeneration Committee, [Call for Evidence – New Towns for London](#), March 2026, BusinessLDN Ref No.NT005, p.85

¹⁵¹ BusinessLDN, [Generating Land Value to Grow London](#), January 2025, p.6

¹⁵² London Assembly Planning and Regeneration Committee, [Committee correspondence: Letter from Deputy Mayor Tom Copley](#), 27 May 2026

¹⁵³ London Assembly Planning and Regeneration Committee, [Committee correspondence: Letter from Deputy Mayor Tom Copley](#), 27 May 2026

¹⁵⁴ BusinessLDN, [Generating Land Value to Grow London](#), January 2025, p.3

¹⁵⁵ London Assembly Planning and Regeneration Committee, [Committee correspondence: Letter from Deputy Mayor Tom Copley](#), 27 May 2026

¹⁵⁶ London Assembly Planning and Regeneration Committee, [Committee correspondence: Letter from Deputy Mayor Tom Copley](#), 27 May 2026

¹⁵⁷ London Assembly Planning and Regeneration Committee, [New Towns for London - Part 1 – Panel One](#), 28 January 2026, p.16

¹⁵⁸ Mayor of London, [Mayoral Community Infrastructure Levy](#), [accessed May 2026]

Emerson highlighted that these were one-off cases and that “if the Mayor had more powers to do some land value capture without asking HMT [His Majesty’s Treasury], that would be helpful.”¹⁵⁹ A recent report from the GLA Oversight Committee also noted the need to simplify the process between the Mayor and the Government for negotiating TIF schemes.¹⁶⁰

The proposed rail infrastructure for London’s new towns could be an opportunity for the Mayor to utilise innovative methods of land value capture such as resi-TIF, if he had the power to do so. David Christie, Head of Growth and Masterplanning at TFL, explained that the money borrowed to pay for the DLR extension at Thamesmead Waterfront is planned to be repaid incrementally via fare revenues from new passengers, “but also some of the planning gain” including “business rates uplift, and other sources of funding.”¹⁶¹ David Christie also specifically expressed that land value capture could be used for the financing of the increased rail services at Crews Hill station.¹⁶²

The Committee welcomes the Government’s approach to utilising land value capture as a way to partly finance infrastructure investment in new towns. To make this process a more simple and faster method of generating revenue, that avoids the Mayor needing to negotiate with the Treasury every time he wants to implement a land value capture scheme in London, there should be a standardised land value capture model established that can be broadly adopted. We believe there is a strong case for devolving powers to the Mayor to allow this to happen, ensuring that any new towns designated in London are able to easily utilise land value capture methods to bring forward funding.¹⁶³

Recommendation 4

The Government should grant the Mayor additional powers to utilise a range of land value capture methods, which could include a comprehensive land value tax or borrowing against future tax receipts.

¹⁵⁹ London Assembly Planning and Regeneration Committee, [New Towns for London - Part 1 – Panel One](#), 28 January 2026, p.16

¹⁶⁰ GLA Oversight Committee, [Trusting London to deliver: our place in the Government’s devolution reforms](#), September 2025, p.41

¹⁶¹ London Assembly Planning and Regeneration Committee, [New Towns for London - Part 2 – Panel One](#), 11 February 2026, p.10

¹⁶² London Assembly Planning and Regeneration Committee, [New Towns for London - Part 2 – Panel One](#), 11 February 2026, p.11

¹⁶³ Benali Hamdache AM does not believe the evidence presented in this chapter adequately reflects the relative ineffectiveness of tax increment financing (TIF) as a mechanism for capturing land value, nor the risks associated with its use. For instance, Benali Hamdache AM maintains that when used to partially fund the Northern line extension, TIF incentivised the creation of a high value commercial environment to the exclusion of many existing residents, and was part of a funding model that directly resulted in low affordable housing delivery around the new stations.

Appendix

The New Towns Taskforce's Placemaking Principles

- **Vision-led** – Each new town should have a clear long-term vision for creating a well-designed and distinctive place, supported by a town-wide strategic masterplan and design code to ensure placemaking quality.
- **Ambitious density** – New towns should be built at a density sufficient to enable residents to walk to local amenities, support public transport, unlock better social infrastructure, and create active and liveable neighbourhoods, with the Government establishing clear minimum density thresholds.
- **Affordable housing and balanced communities** – New towns should provide a diverse range of high-quality housing, with a range of housing types and tenures to suit the needs of a balanced community. This should include a minimum target of 40 per cent affordable housing, of which at least half to be available for social rent.
- **Social infrastructure** – New towns should support thriving communities by ensuring access to schools, cultural, sporting and healthcare facilities, and other social infrastructure that meets new residents' needs from the outset.
- **Healthy and safe places** – New towns should be healthy and safe places which promote active lives for residents, with easily accessible green spaces and recreational facilities.
- **Environmental sustainability** – New towns should be designed and delivered to embrace environmental principles, with buildings and neighbourhoods that are low carbon, climate resilient and which help to protect, restore and enhance biodiversity.
- **Transport connectivity** – New towns should connect people to skills, jobs, services and amenities. This should include high-quality public transport, walking and cycling networks within each town and convenient connections into wider transport networks.
- **Business creation and employment opportunities** – New towns must be places that provide jobs for residents and enable businesses to grow, supporting the government's economic growth mission.
- **Stewardship** – A sustainable stewardship model for new towns should be in place from the outset, including clear governance and funding structures to manage and maintain communal assets over the long term.

- **Community engagement** – New towns should establish clear and effective ways to engage the local community in shaping the vision and proposals for their town and empower residents to build social capital and help define the town’s cultural identity.¹⁶⁴

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¹⁶⁴ New Towns Taskforce, [Report to Government](#), September 2025

Committee Activity

The Planning and Regeneration Committee held two formal meetings to inform this investigation.

The first took place on 28 January 2026 with:

- **Dr Thomas Aubrey**, Visiting Senior Fellow, The London School of Economics and Political Science;
- **Charlie Berry**, Policy Manager at Shelter;
- **Kane Emerson**, Head of Housing Research at Yes In My Back Yard (YIMBY) Alliance;
- **Tom Perry**, Director of Urbanism and Landscape Projects at The King's Foundation;
- **Esther Everett**, Director of Placemaking, LLDC (London Legacy Development Corporation);
- **James O'Malley**, Freelance Journalist and Podcaster;
- **Susan Parham**, Associate Professor, University of Hertfordshire;
- **John Walker**, Former Deputy Chief Executive, Milton Keynes Development Corporation, and Former Chief Executive, Commission for New Towns;
- **Guy Courtois**, Founder of Pour Une Renaissance Urbaine.

The second took place on 11 February 2026 with:

- **David Christie**, Head of Growth and Masterplanning at Transport for London (TfL);
- **Sowmya Parthasarathy**, Director, Arup, and New Towns Taskforce member;
- **Kate Greenaway**, Project Director, Thamesmead Waterfront, Peabody;
- **Brett Leahy**, Strategic Director of Planning, Growth and Infrastructure at the London Borough of Enfield;
- **Louise Duggan**, Head of Regeneration and Growth Strategies at the Greater London Authority (GLA);
- **Tom Copley**, Deputy Mayor for Housing and Residential Development.

The Committee also opened a call for evidence between 21 January to 4 March 2026. The Committee received 13 responses, [published here](#), from the following organisations:

- **Action for Enfield's Future**
- **Anne Ogundiya**
- **Arup**
- **Better Homes Enfield**
- **BusinessLDN**
- **CPRE**
- **Environment Agency**
- **Greater London Authority**
- **L&Q**
- **London Legacy Development Corporation**
- **Pour une Renaissance Urbaine**
- **Social Life**
- **Thamesmead Waterfront JV**

On 9 January 2026, the London Assembly Research Unit submitted Freedom of Information requests to the 33 local authorities in London, asking for details of any new town submissions made to the Government or New Towns Taskforce. A summary of the responses are [published here](#).

On 22 January 2026, the Committee also attended a site visit hosted by Peabody, to see the Thamesmead Waterfront site.

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Other formats and languages

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