

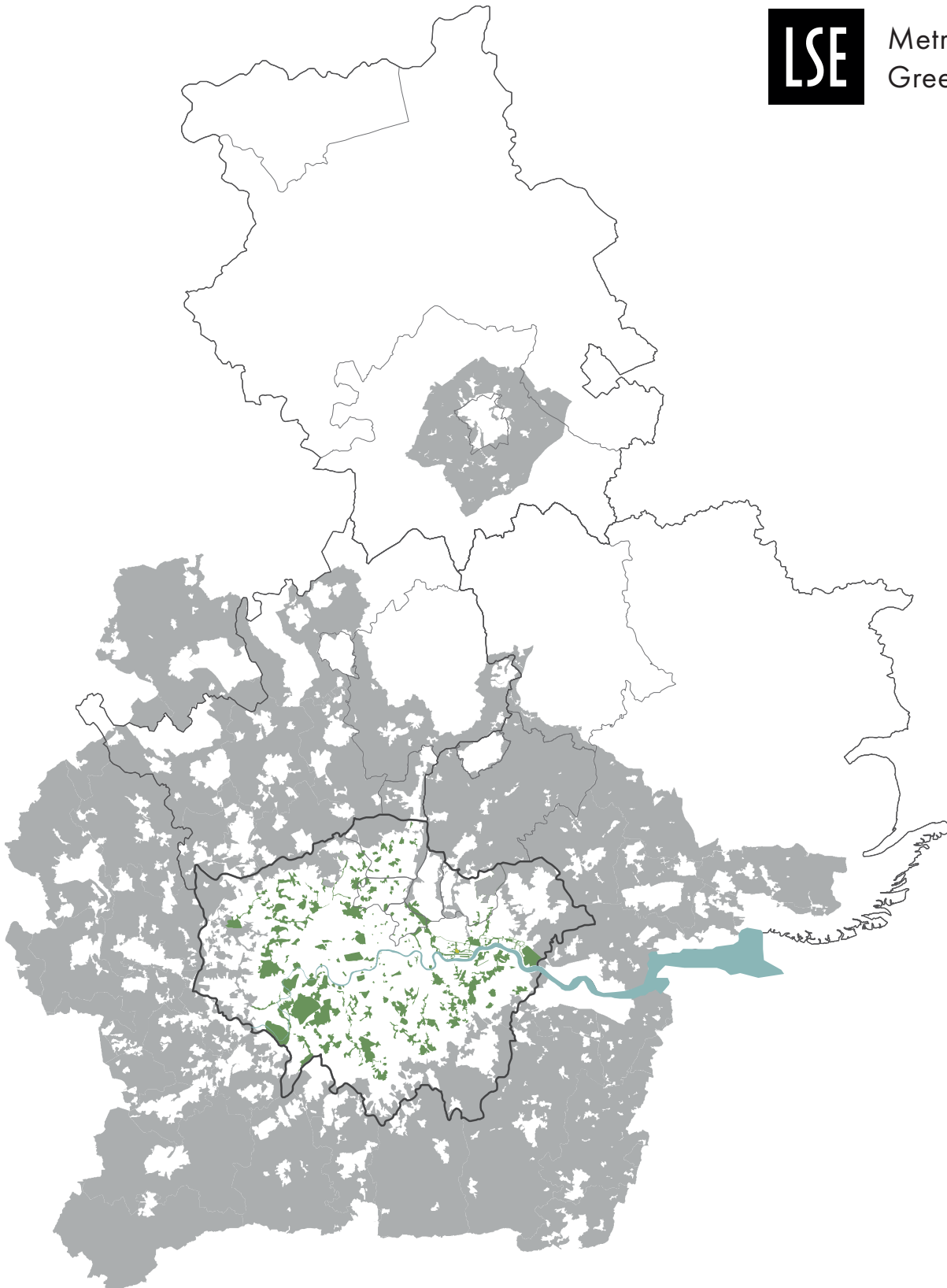
# THE LONDON - CAMBRIDGE CORRIDOR

## MAKING MORE OF GREEN BELT

February 2018



Metropolitan  
Green Belt KEI







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With Levitt Bernstein

Levitt Bernstein  
People.Design

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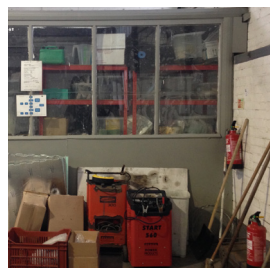
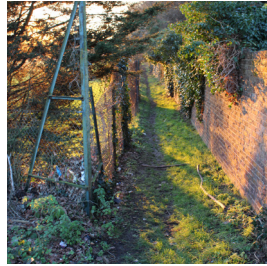
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# 1 | INTRODUCTION

For decades we have failed to provide enough housing leading to a growing gulf between the housing haves and the housing have nots. The Brexit vote has led to a renewed focus on the UK's economy and its competitiveness as the country seeks to define a new position in the world. Of course, these are closely related as employers need to attract employees who need housing. The failure to provide enough housing threatens our economy as it restricts the ability of people to move to jobs. Over recent decades commuting distances have increased as part of an ever more complex economy better understood at a scale greater than the local and even the city. Yet, following the sudden abolition of regional planning in England in 2011 we have few mechanisms to plan at a more than local level.

There is growing acceptance by government of the need for joined up planning beyond the local level. A series of innovations are underway including a focus on corridors as a valid way of planning at more than a local level, a high profile example being the Oxford-Milton Keynes-Cambridge corridor to which we return later. Absent from, or more accurately, ruled out of the developing debate on corridors is the role of green belt policy. This is particularly important once we realise that green belt is the only regional policy that governments have strictly enforced for over eight decades – even after the abolition of regional planning. Planning effectively at a more than local scale will be essential as we continue to seek to address the chronic undersupply of housing and the country's economic future, but at present green belt is the tail wagging the dog.

Green belt has maintained its power because it is a single aim and because it is simple to implement. Its aim is to preserve an open view of countryside free of buildings, implemented by not building. It does not require public access to the countryside nor does it require environmental stewardship of the land. This report looks at how a positive approach to reform could have green belt serve our wider social objectives. This is a call to put green belt in its place. While the corridor approach could be delivered with the current green belt and its present day purpose in place, we argue that this would lead to sub-optimal planning in corridors. Green belt has expanded exponentially since its inception and we now work around it. We should continue the policy but

should place green belt where it supports a wide range of social, economic and environmental objectives.

In looking at the Cambridge-London corridor we develop on themes from our earlier '*Towards a 21st Century Metropolitan Green Belt*'. In that we recognised two contrary elements, the difficulty of achieving necessary political support for change at the national level and the need to have that support in order to make sufficiently bold a reform to signal a move away from piecemeal development in green belt. The latter is required to change developer behaviour which is formed in response to current policy. Our response was to propose designating a pioneer corridor between London and Cambridge where green belt reform could be tested. This would offer the opportunity to demonstrate the benefit of reform at scale while containing it to a given area, making it more acceptable to a government nervous of reform.

The report is structured in four further sections:

- in section **2 | BACKGROUND** we set out how we arrived at the pioneer corridor approach and briefly relate this to the Greater London Authority's recently released draft London Plan and other current documents;
- in section **3 | THE PIONEER** corridor we start with an overview of corridor based planning before turning to the London-Cambridge corridor where we set out the benefits of an approach to green belt that contributes to, but does not determine the pattern of development. Our proposals raise issues related to funding the conditions for green belt reform and to the governance of corridors;
- in section **4 | FUNDING & GOVERNANCE** we argue for the importance of mechanisms to capture for public benefit a significant proportion of any uplift in land value accruing from a change of green belt policy. Methods for doing so have implications for how the corridor might be managed as some arrangements would better be achieved through corridor-wide co-ordination.

We do not claim to offer complete or easy solutions, in particular to the under supply of housing; rather we set out the issues and indicate options. We do not shy away from the difficulties of reform and so take a long-term approach to green belt that requires us to have in place mechanisms to ensure clear public benefit as part of a planned approach to reform and not purely market solutions where private interests prevail.



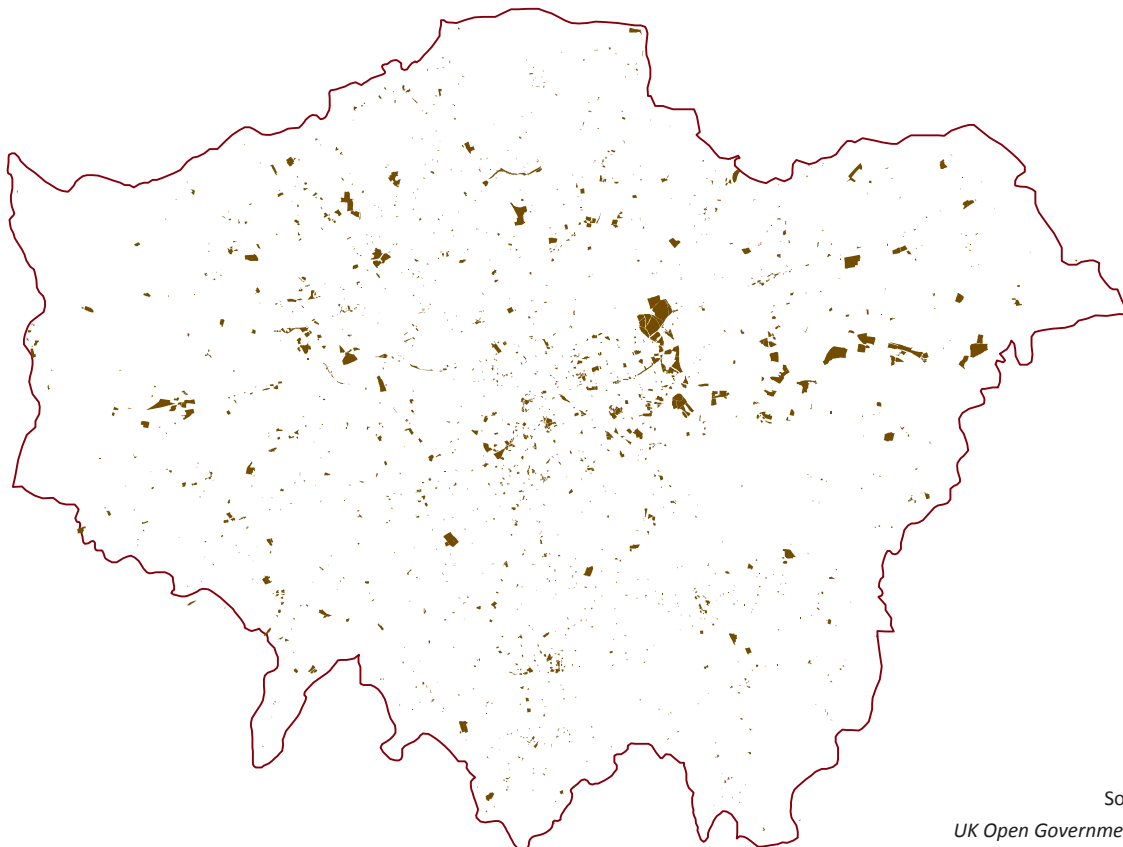
There is much talk of a housing crisis at present. We chose to avoid the use of the term crisis in this report for several reasons. First, to have reached a crisis suggests that action will become a political necessity. There is some way to go before we look like we are seeking to deal with a crisis. Second, crisis suggests the possibility of a rushed response. We do not think that green belt policy should be changed in an ill-considered manner in response to a crisis. Third, a crisis suggests something short term that may pass through circumstances. Brexit may mean fewer immigrants and demand for housing may weaken for any number of other reasons. However, a chronic shortage focuses us on the long-term problem including that we have increasingly to house four rather than three generations; fewer immigrants or weaker than predicted growth in the economy may lessen talk of a crisis but will not solve the chronic shortage.



## 2 | BACKGROUND

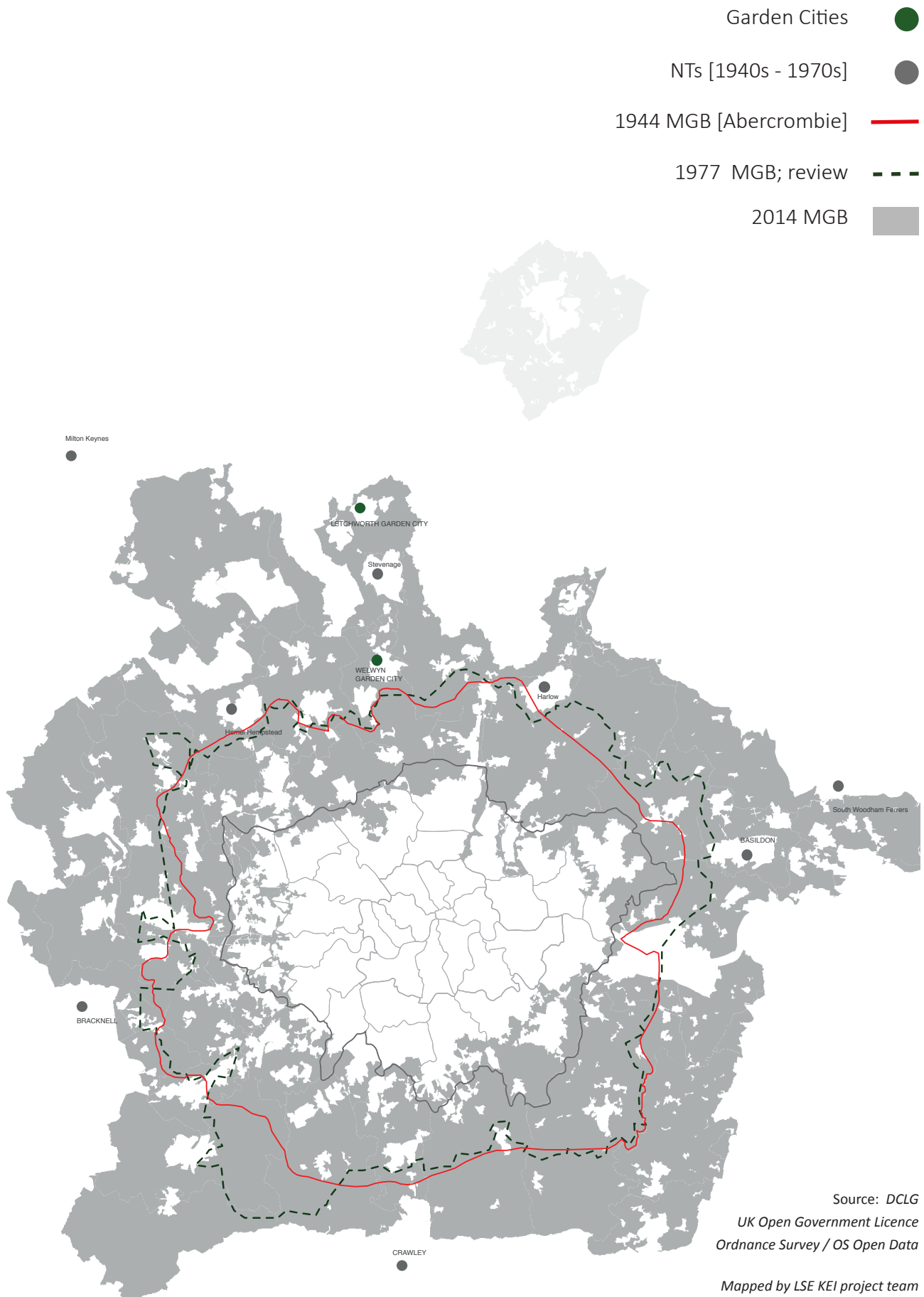
In this section we set out how we arrived at the corridor approach and briefly relate this to the Greater London Authority's recently released draft London Plan. We built our case in the following way. First, we set out why responding to the chronic undersupply of housing requires us to look again at green belt. This included recognising the limits of current brownfield policy [Fig.2.1]. Second, was to look at the options for intervention including the conditions under which this might take place. Here the case was that intervention needs to take place at scale in order to signal a significant relaxation of land constraint and so impact developer behaviour. Third, we looked at how to intervene, as a significant intervention would be difficult for national politicians to support. This led us to favour a corridor approach which brings together developing approaches to regional planning and allows for the identification of a single pioneer corridor where green belt reform could be tested – making it a less risky intervention for national government.

FIG. 2.1 | Brownfield sites GLA [2009]



Source: GLA  
UK Open Government Licence

FIG. 2.2 | Area of Designated Green Belt Land [2014] - New Towns



## 2.1 The need to look again at green belt

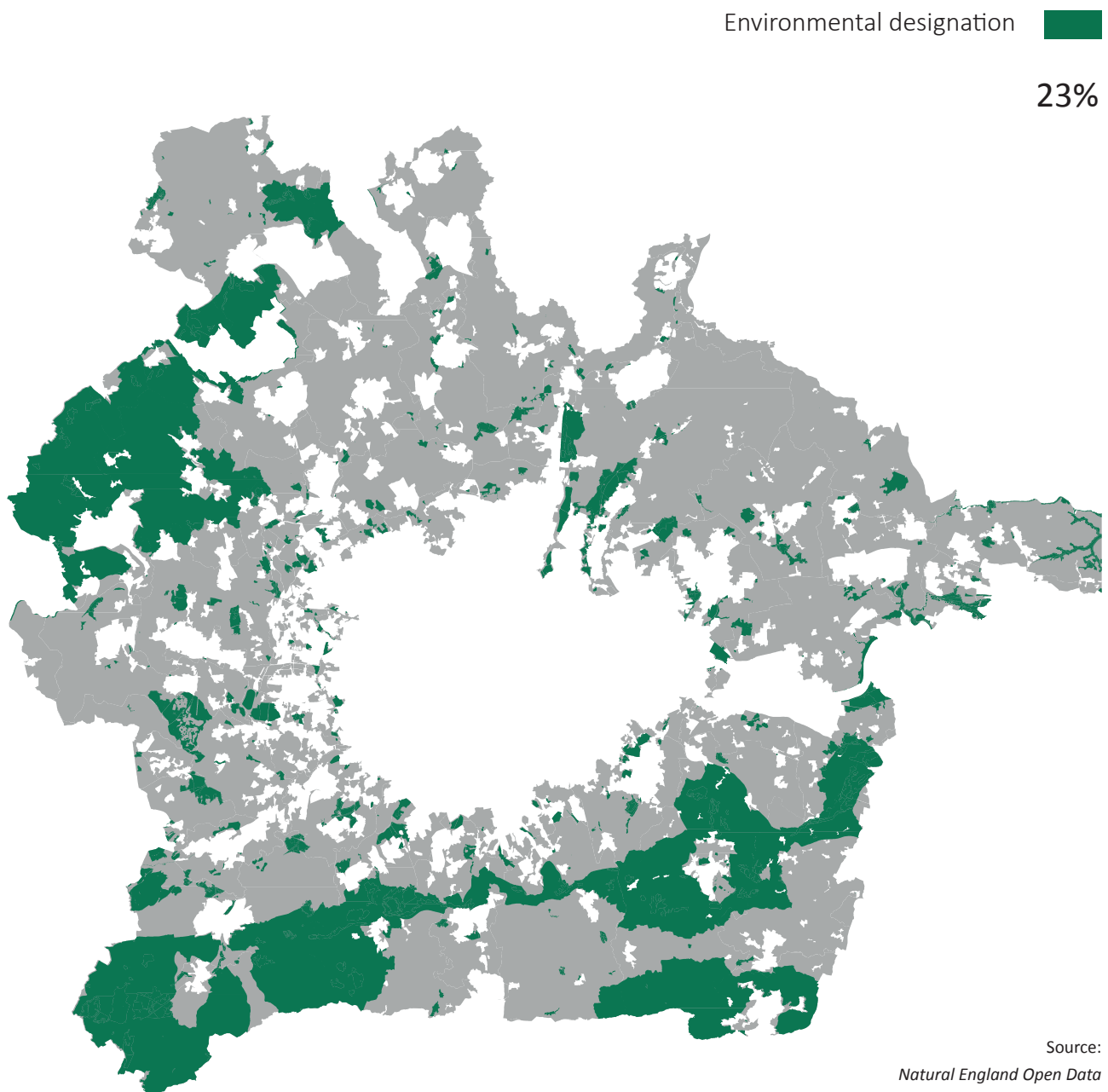
The effects of green belt on land supply were recognised and addressed from its early days. The policy comes from an era of big government that took a central role in industrial policy and housing supply. As a result, in the early days green belt was part of a group of policies that sought to direct where development happened at a regional and national scale. Green belt constrained the outward growth of some cities while New Town policy identified alternative locations for new housing, often built by the state, and industry [Fig.2.2]. Meanwhile Industrial Development Certificates (IDCs) and controls on office development sought to direct commercial growth to poorer performing cities and away from burgeoning cities (sometimes but not always constrained by green belt). Of this group of policies only green belt constraint remains as an ‘orphaned’ policy that continues to restrict land supply while the rest of the family of policies providing land has been abandoned. New Towns did not provide an adequate supply of housing<sup>1</sup>, but we have further constrained our options by relying on brownfield sites as a partial substitute. An argument against green belt reform is that brownfield is up to the task of providing enough housing land to address the chronic undersupply. A simple calculation equates the total stock of brownfield land to housing need and concludes the two are in balance. We do not doubt the importance of seeking to reuse brownfield land in our cities but, while supportive of this objective, there is much evidence to suggest that the current emphasis on brownfield will not solve the chronic undersupply of housing. This is because experience shows that much of the brownfield land we have will simply not be built on in a timely manner, if at all.

Given this, we next asked what the options were. Looked at across London and the Wider South East (hereafter WSE)<sup>2</sup> we described a range of alternatives from minimal change of green belt policy to abolition. Even with no policy change occasionally sites become available in green belt and permission to develop is granted - typically where an existing building is to be replaced. The next and more proactive option is for local authorities to use their power to carry out a review of their green belt. Central government policy makes clear that this process is only expected to produce minor changes in designation. Some authorities have made more significant changes through this process, but these are exceptions. An additional constraint is that reviews only take place on an authority by authority basis so there is no option to take a strategic review of green belt across

1 Peter Hall et al. 1973. *The Containment of Urban England*, Allen and Unwin

2 Named the Greater South East by Peter Hall, the WSE is now in more common usage and refers to areas within the former government office regions of the East, South East and London. A broader definition of the Greater South East also includes Dorset, Northamptonshire and Wiltshire.

FIG. 2.3 | Land with environmental designation in MGB



multiple authorities. In London each borough with green belt may undertake a review but the mayor cannot undertake a London-wide review. The options described so far are available under current planning legislation. Their overall effect is to produce piecemeal change in the green belt that leads to concern over where it will end while failing to produce a significant change in land supply.

The remaining options require central government to provide increasingly more permissive regimes for review/change. First the government could create a more permissive environment for review where green belt is near to railway stations or other key infrastructure and where it would be logical to increase development density to make use of this. Next would be for government to permit more flexible green belt review where local authorities wish to see the development of urban extensions. On a larger scale, government could make green belt review available at a cross authority/regional/corridor scale. These options all represent degrees of devolution of green belt review down to the local level by making the current regime more permissive. The final option would be for central government to abolish green belt policy altogether, under which circumstances local authorities would be able to use other existing planning powers (e.g. Sites of Special Scientific Interest and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty [Fig. 2.3], to protect parts of the former green belt of exceptional value/quality.

Our preferred option was for government to delegate down green belt policy to allow for reviews at a strategic (multi-authority) level. This stops well short of abolition but signals a significant change of policy that could impact developer behaviour. It also allows for the addressing of green belt as a regional policy, but why is this important? Changes in the economy and society lead to regional scale changes in the demand for commercial space, housing and transport infrastructure. Green belt constraint has a significant impact on where and how this change is accommodated. Currently we rely on brownfield sites when they become available and where they become available. Yet, it is most unlikely that brownfield sites will always become available at the right time and in the best place. Second, we continue to build on greenfield sites beyond the green belt. One effect of this is to increase commuting distances as people live on one side of the green belt and work on the other. In practice the green belt has, "...served both to make urban areas more compact and functional urban regions less so"<sup>3</sup>. Third, we build on green belt land in a piecemeal manner. The overall impact is a reactive rather than a proactive approach to deciding where we want development to take place.

3 Gordon, I. 2008. Density and the built environment. *Energy Policy* 36 (12), 4652–4656. P4653.4

Delegating the power to reform green belt would require a change of policy by national government, unlikely in the face of local opposition to reform. To address the latter we proposed conditions that should be met as part of any reform [Fig. 2.4]. Our conditions do not represent an easy or complete solution; rather they indicate some of the key issues that need to be addressed to make planned reform of the green belt acceptable.

The conditions will not offset all opposition, for some there are simply no circumstances under which green belt reform would ever be acceptable. Understanding the core purpose of green belt is key to explaining this. Essentially, green belt enforces a visual preference, to maintain views of rural openness by stopping any building encroaching these. Because it is about openness – the view rather than the land – green belt does not guarantee access to open space, the majority of the green belt is not open to the public. Green belt does not guarantee that the land is well looked after. In many cases it is intensively farmed or used as golf courses and provides a low quality natural environment. Our conditions will not persuade those entirely wedded to the visual case because there are no conditions that can stop development on green belt land changing, to some degree, the openness of the view. Notwithstanding this, careful siting and the landscaping of new development could make a substantial contribution to reducing the impact on openness<sup>4</sup>.

In our view any loss of openness has to be weighed against the costs of preserving all green belt in its present state. It is true that once land is developed it will not return to being open other than in very exceptional circumstances (as in parts of Detroit). Therefore, it is right that we should proceed with care when developing on former green belt. The challenge is to support economic and social wellbeing while respecting as far as possible the aesthetic of openness. In addition, and distinct from green belt policy, we need to have due regard for the environment.

This still leaves the need to convince the government to legislate for a more permissive green belt policy, to delegate down the power to make significant change. We acknowledged that currently this is most unlikely. In an attempt to square this particular circle we suggested that policy makers look to the coordination corridors in the London Plan. Five corridors are depicted stretching out from London along major road and railway links to: Bedford/Luton; Peterborough/Cambridge; East Thames (Dartford, Grays, Gravesend); Sutton/Gatwick, and; Slough/Reading. Their naming draws

4 The Landscape Institute has taken a considered view on green belt reform and contribute much to realising it in a sensitive manner <https://www.landscapeinstitute.org/policy/green-belt-policy/>



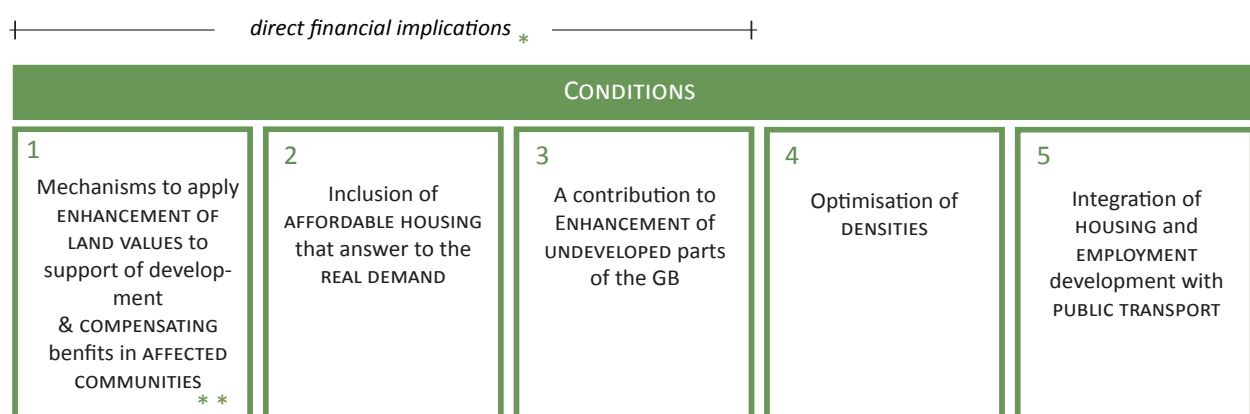
attention to the need for cross boundary working as economic activity, commuting patterns and housing demand all move across political borders stressing the interrelatedness of London and the WSE.

The corridor approach was attractive to us for a number of reasons. First, it supported a key assertion that the chronic undersupply of housing, as well as planning for employment and transport is not just a London problem and should not pitch London against the counties that surround it. The corridors recognise that addressing employment, transport and housing needs requires integrated planning across the WSE.

Second, it invites the possibility of a ‘pioneer corridor’, a single corridor used as a test case. This would allow for the demonstration of green belt reform that is both significant enough to signal a change in land constraint yet contained so as to reassure those who remain to be convinced of the need for full reform (including the government). We suggested the London-Cambridge corridor because of existing strong partnerships that represent a coalition of the willing.

Third, it addresses the ‘regional problem’. The green belt is a regional policy in a country without regions. Calling for their reinstatement would be another battle alongside green belt reform and in

FIG. 2.4 | Conditions for development in the green belt

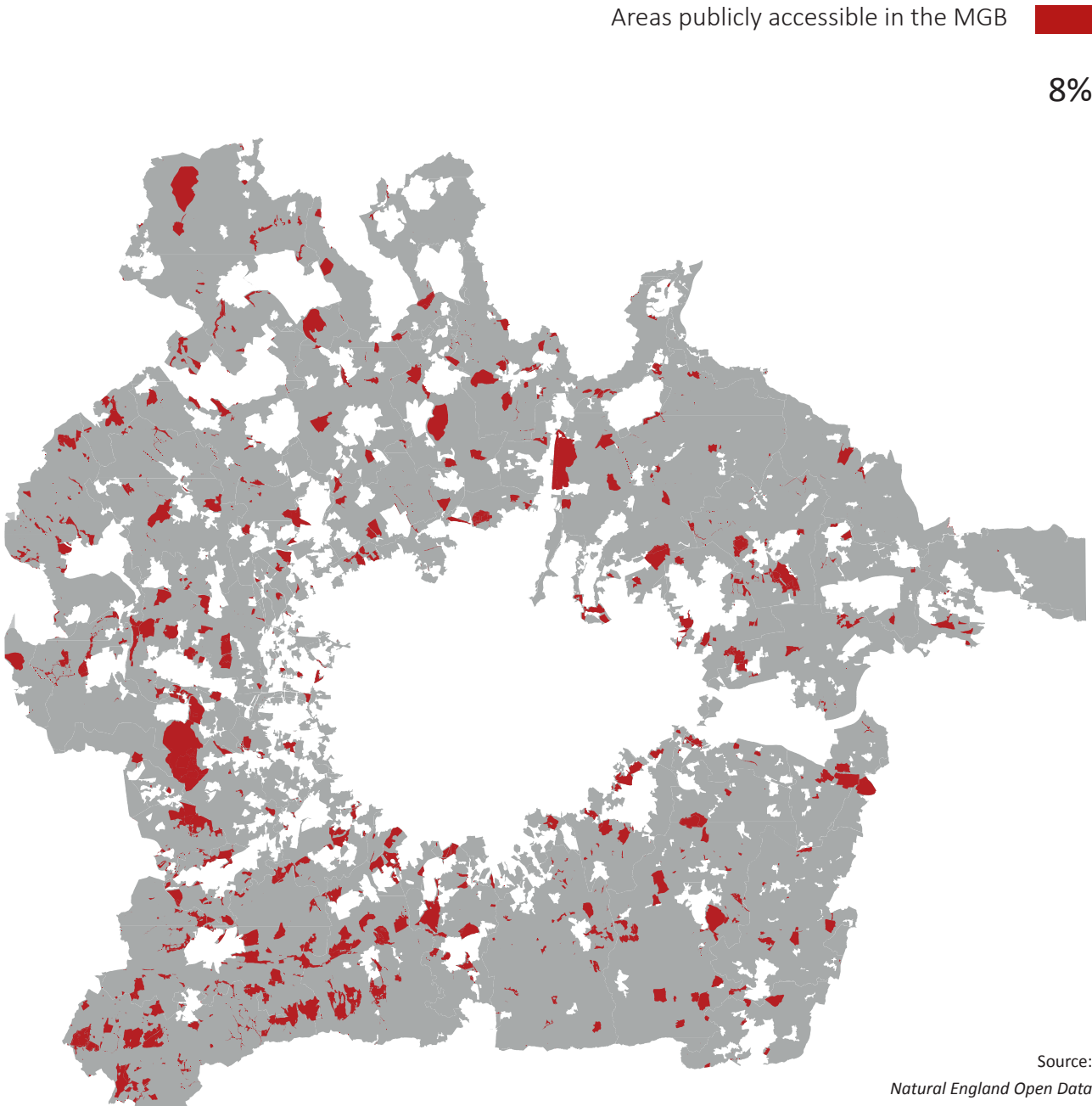


\* Conditions 1-3 have direct financial implications to which we turn in section 4.

\*\* A recent government report supports the 1st condition: “It is widely accepted that one of the principal reasons that local people oppose development is because of the perceived adverse impact on local infrastructure, particularly local road networks and the availability of school places and doctors’ surgeries.”

([https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/589637/CIL\\_REPORT\\_2016.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/589637/CIL_REPORT_2016.pdf))

FIG. 2.5 | Land with public access in the MGB

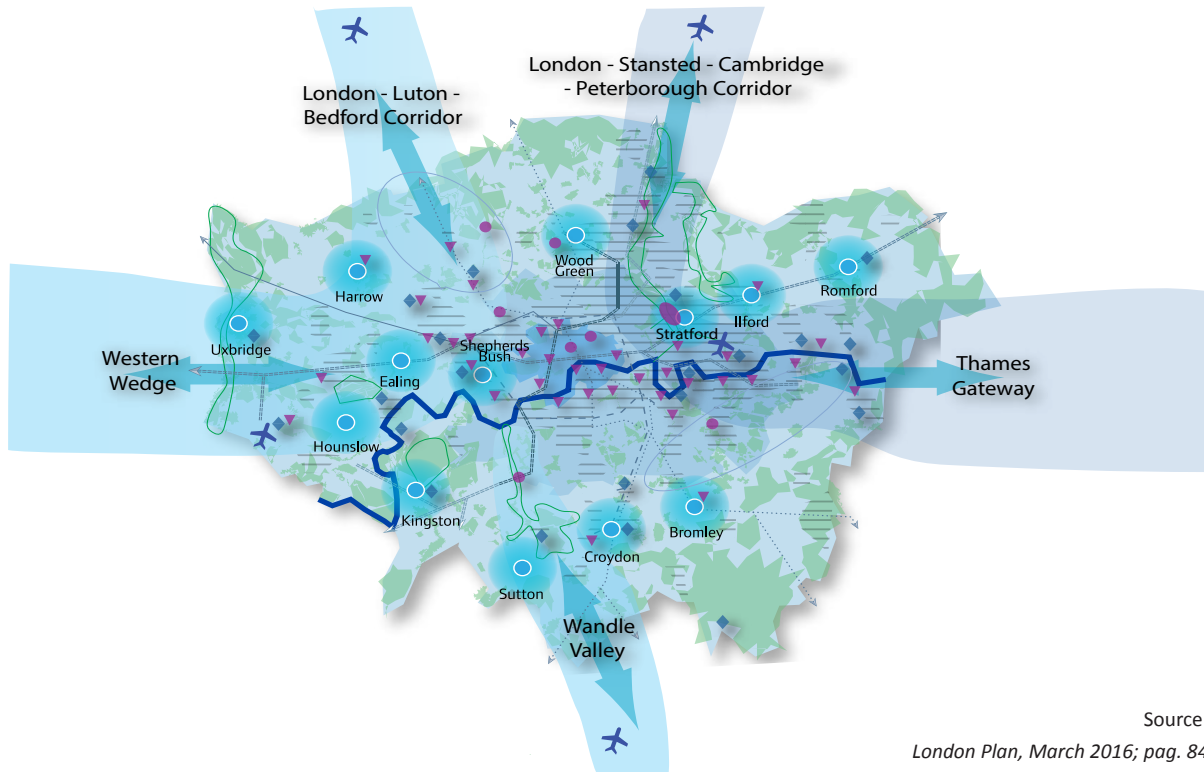


any case they had been far from perfect as they split up the counties surrounding London and so were not particularly aligned with the 'reality' of the Wider South East.

Fourth, it returns us to the roots and purpose of green belt policy that was originally intended to give the public access to open space before becoming thought of as a belt designed to constrain growth [Fig. 2.5]. A more detailed history of the green belt is set out in our previous report. This is more than a historical curiosity, as justifications for the green belt change over time requiring clarity over its present day purpose, benefits and costs<sup>5</sup>.

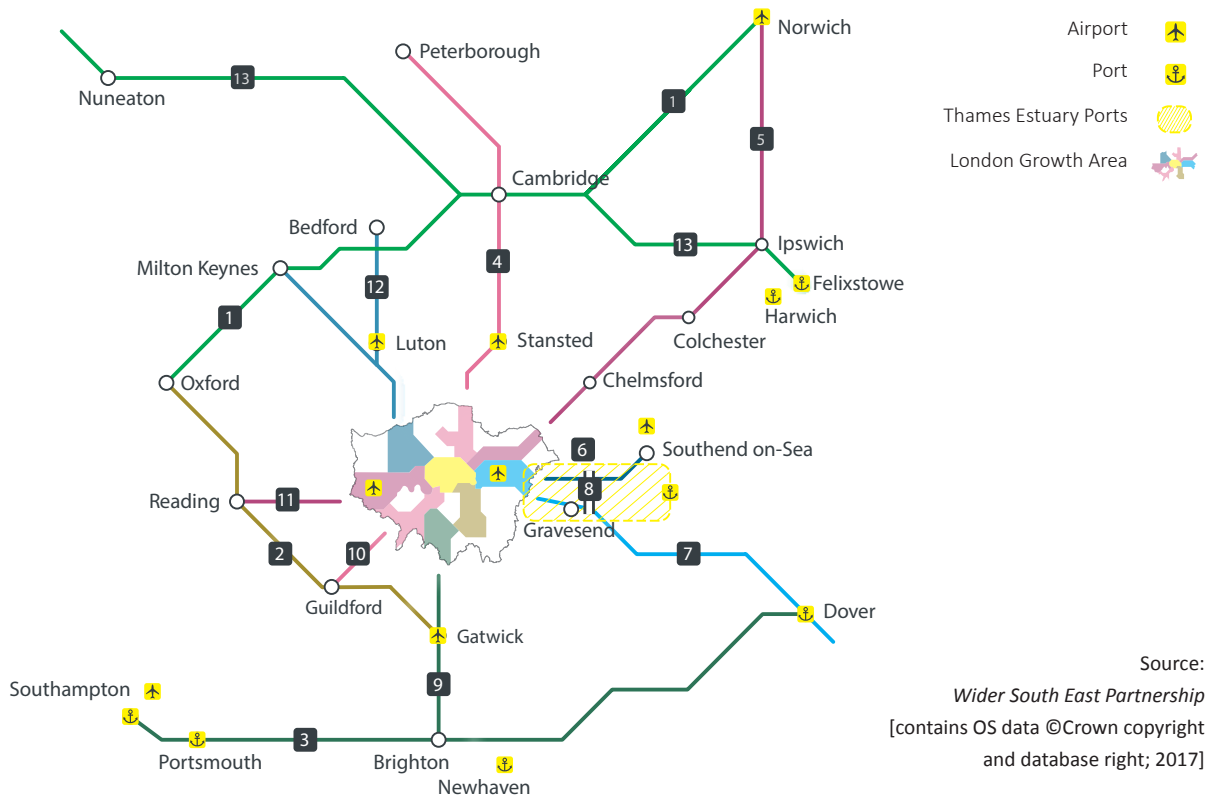
5 <http://blogs.lse.ac.uk/politicsandpolicy/beware-new-justifications-for-green-belt-what-we-need-is-a-new-approach/>

FIG. 2.6 | Key diagram coordination corridor



Source:  
London Plan, March 2016; pag. 84

FIG. 2.7 | Strategic infrastructure priorities



Source:  
Wider South East Partnership  
[contains OS data ©Crown copyright  
and database right; 2017]

## 2.2 Corridors and the new London Plan

Events have moved on during the preparation of this report. In the draft version of the new London Plan<sup>6</sup> the five ‘co-ordination corridors’ that informed our earlier report are replaced by ‘strategic infrastructure priorities’ [Fig.2.7] in the draft plan. These make a more overt link to transport connections both radial (into London) and orbital (around London). These all pass through areas of green belt and most of the towns and cities along them are surrounded by green belt (e.g. Cambridge, Guildford, Luton, Oxford) or are close to it (Milton Keynes, Chelmsford).

The welcome recognition of the interrelationship between London and the WSE (covered in several sections of chapter 2 ‘*Spatial Development Patterns*’, results in little tangible change from the approach of the previous plan [Fig.2.6]. While the statement in the new plan, “London is not an island”, is welcome the approach is still as though London were one. The sentiment responds to pressure from central government increasingly to cooperate with neighbouring authorities (the need for a ‘duty to cooperate’ mechanism arising from the earlier decision to abolish regional planning structures). Although this is welcome we believe that the draft plan fails to address sufficiently the limitation of the existing compact city approach. It helpfully recognises the importance of corridors across the WSE while failing to take into account the need for green belt reform to make these corridors work effectively.

The refusal to consider change to London’s green belt in the draft plan is likely to make neighbouring authorities less willing themselves to take a positive approach to green belt reform. This is already evident, in 2016 a group of authorities in the South East argued, “[t]here should either be a review of the green belt across the WSE or the Mayor should act to accommodate the impact of his green belt policy within London”<sup>7</sup>. In other words, the Mayor cannot rule out changing London’s part of the green belt yet expect others to do so. As 93% of the metropolitan green belt is outside London this seems like a poor decision for London. Residents and politicians in the WSE are already suspicious of London seeking to export its housing need. This perception is only made worse when London refuses to rethink its part of the green belt.

Rather the draft plan plays down the need for London to work with its partners to address housing

6 Out to consultation from late 2017 to early 2018

7 [https://www.london.gov.uk/sites/default/files/wse\\_3rd\\_summit\\_dec\\_2016\\_-\\_notes.pdf](https://www.london.gov.uk/sites/default/files/wse_3rd_summit_dec_2016_-_notes.pdf)

undersupply. It notes “[t]he GLA’s new Strategic Housing Market Assessment shows that London has a need for approximately 66,000 additional homes a year. The Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment suggests that London has the capacity for around 65,000 additional homes a year and the housing targets in this Plan reflect this.” This suggests a very modest shortfall but experience shows us that capacity (sites available for housing) is not the same as delivery<sup>8</sup>. Returning to an earlier point, we expect the private sector to deliver most of our housing but we can’t make it build where it doesn’t want to, where sites need new infrastructure to make them viable for example. Past experience makes it very reasonable to expect that London will fall significantly short of delivering its housing needs, the chronic undersupply will remain and will not be solved by a drop in migration or worse than expected growth. Therefore, while the draft plan recognises the need to work “with willing partners” beyond London “to accommodate more growth in sustainable locations outside the capital”, we do not think this adds up to a need to locate only 1,000 homes outside the city.

In addition to housing, there is a case for developing commercial uses outside London as a trade-off where London sacrifices some of its commercial land for housing in the knowledge that alternative sites will be available in the WSE. This is mooted in the Outer London Commission’s seventh and final report<sup>9</sup> which looked at ways of accommodating London’s growth and which pre-empted the “London is not an island” approach in the draft plan. As with housing we have to be careful not to assume that one parcel of land is easily substitutable for another. Not every household or every business will want to locate in places made available through ‘swaps’ between London and the WSE just as not all will find former brownfield sites provide acceptable locations. Nevertheless, mindful of this, it is still sensible to plan across London and the WSE to see where uses might be traded.

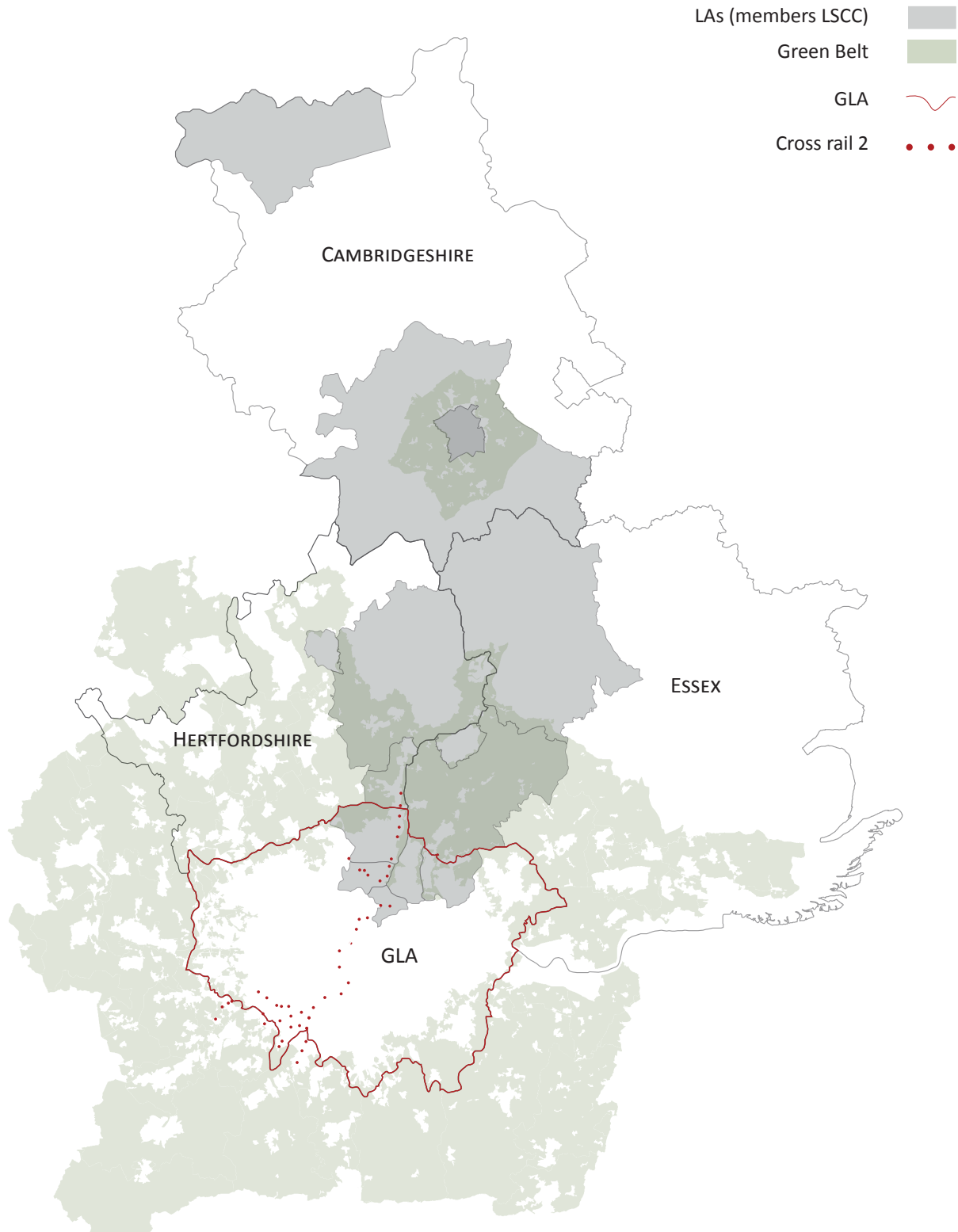
Ruling out change in green belt policy risks further increasing long distance commuting across the green belt if other authorities in the WSE take a similar approach. And not just long distance commuting into London but also from one centre to another across the WSE, if we don’t re-plan the green belt to work with changes in the distribution of employment and the delivery of new infrastructure. If infrastructure projects are realised without green belt reform we will find ourselves

8 Moliur, 2014. Barriers to housing delivery—Update private sector housing development on larger sites in London.  
[https://www.london.gov.uk/sites/default/files/gla\\_migrate\\_files\\_destination/Barriers%20to%20Housing%20Delivery%20Update%20Report%20-%20July%202014\\_0.pdf](https://www.london.gov.uk/sites/default/files/gla_migrate_files_destination/Barriers%20to%20Housing%20Delivery%20Update%20Report%20-%20July%202014_0.pdf)

9 [https://www.london.gov.uk/sites/default/files/olc\\_accommodating\\_growth\\_executive\\_summary.pdf](https://www.london.gov.uk/sites/default/files/olc_accommodating_growth_executive_summary.pdf)

unable to build on land near to new/expanded railway stations and road junctions; as happened in the case of Crossrail One/The Elizabeth Line<sup>10</sup>.

FIG. 2.8 | London - Stansted - Cambridge - Peterborough Corridor



10 Paul Cheshire 2014. Where Should We Build on the Green Belt? LSE British Politics and Policy Blog. <http://blogs.lse.ac.uk/politicsandpolicy/building-on-green-belt-land/>

## 3 | THE PIONEER CORRIDOR

In this section we start with an overview of corridor based planning before turning to the London-Cambridge corridor where we set out the benefits of an approach to green belt that contributes to, but does not determine the pattern of development. This echoes the proposition of Herrington back in 1990 that green belt should be conceived of as a regional policy, "... shaping urban patterns within the extended London region<sup>11</sup>" and not as just a series of belts limiting growth at the edge of a number of towns and cities.

### 3.1 Planning with corridors

There is a long history of planning for corridors with the Copenhagen Finger Plan of the 1940s probably being the most cited example. While this was planned, in many cases corridors of development have simply occurred with plans for them being retrospectively developed. Examples of this include along the east coast of the US and in India between Mumbai and Delhi where the 'Delhi Mumbai Industrial Corridor', is claimed to be the largest infrastructure project in the world<sup>12</sup>. At the city scale, Johannesburg's 'corridors of freedom' plan to link poorer neighbourhoods to the central business district through Bus Rapid Transit. In the UK The Northern Way and now the Northern Powerhouse<sup>13</sup>, The Thames Gateway and the Oxford-Milton Keynes-Cambridge corridor/arc all represent forms of planning for corridors that past and present governments have committed themselves to, to varying degrees.

In November 2017 the National Infrastructure Commission released its report on the Oxford-Milton Keynes-Cambridge corridor, Partnering for Prosperity<sup>14</sup>. This is reflective of the work of the London-Stansted-Cambridge Consortium in focusing on the importance of the respective corridors to the

11 Herrington, J. 1990. Beyond Green Belts: Managing Urban Growth in the 21st Century. Jessica Kingsley Pub. Ltd.: London. P42.

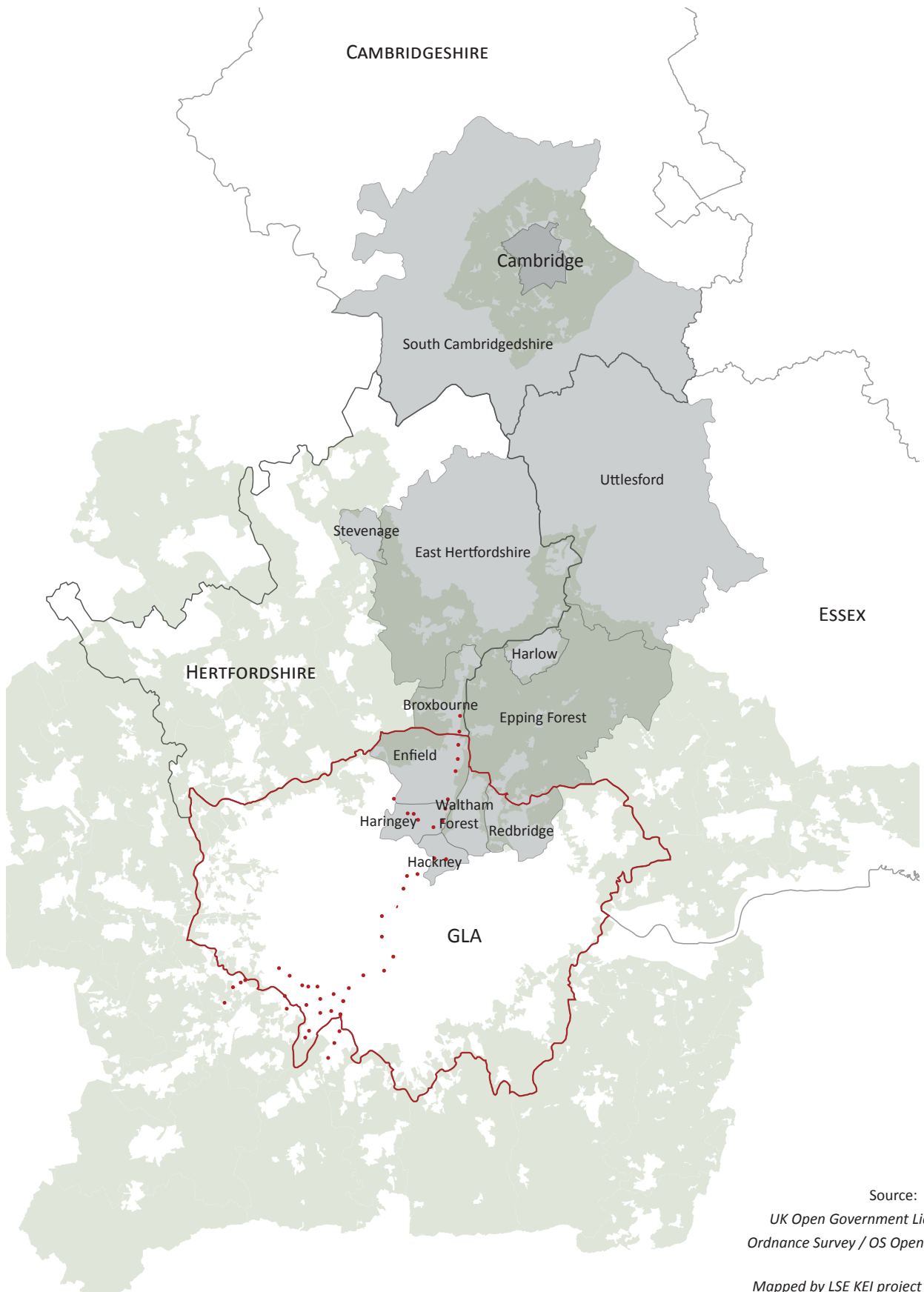
12 <http://www.dmicdc.com/>

13 [http://www.corridorsoffreedom.co.za/attachments/article/1/corridors%20of%20freedom\\_s.pdf](http://www.corridorsoffreedom.co.za/attachments/article/1/corridors%20of%20freedom_s.pdf)

14 <https://northernpowerhouse.gov.uk/>



FIG. 3.1 | London Stansted Corridor Consortium's local authority membership [LSCC]



UK economy, as recognised in the draft of the new London Plan. This resonates with the Brexit process. Whatever the outcome, it is focusing people on the UK's future economic performance with a Conservative Government signalling a philosophical shift by producing an industrial strategy in November 2017<sup>16</sup>.

In the absence of formal regional planning there are partnerships that echo the former regions; notably South East England Councils<sup>17</sup> (covering the former South East region) and East of England local government association<sup>18</sup> (covering the former East of England region). Alongside these, corridors are clearly also an important planning mechanisms linking to the reality of linear infrastructure such as road and rail and the related networks of towns and cities. The need to develop further mechanism for strategic (regional) planning has been recognised by government appointed experts who also recognise the potential role of corridors as a basis for future mechanisms<sup>19</sup>.

### 3.2 London - Cambridge

The London-Cambridge corridor is anchored at both ends by cities with significant knowledge intensive industries (although both contain more than just this). But Cambridge should not be seen as the end point as the corridor runs through to Peterborough and in the same way we can picture the Oxford-Milton Keynes-Cambridge corridor running through to the so-called Silicon Fen to Mildenhall and Newmarket<sup>20</sup> and eventually beyond. Cambridge more accurately sits at the crossroads of two important knowledge intensive corridors in the Wider South East. Multiple other locations such as Stevenage, Harlow and Hertford are both centres in their own right but also are connected to others in the corridor. Stevenage serves as an important area servicing commercial uses related to the Cambridge economy for example.

15 <https://www.nic.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/Partnering-for-Prosperty.pdf>

16 <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/industrial-strategy-building-a-britain-fit-for-the-future>

17 <http://www.secouncils.gov.uk/>

18 <http://www.eelga.gov.uk/>

19 [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/508345/Local-plans-report-to-governement.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/508345/Local-plans-report-to-governement.pdf)

20 [http://www.camclustermmap.com/#?&coll=%7B%22company-type%22%3A%22cambridge\\_based%22%7D](http://www.camclustermmap.com/#?&coll=%7B%22company-type%22%3A%22cambridge_based%22%7D)

## Area of designated Green Belt land by LA in the corridor [March 2014]



ESSEX	GB area (ha)	% GB
Epping Forest	31,680	93.4 %
Harlow	640	21 %
Uttlesford	3810	5.9 %



GLA	GB area (ha)	% GB
Enfield	3,060	37.2 %
Haringey	60	2 %
Redbridge	2,070	36.7 %
Waltham Forest	840	21.6 %
GLA	35,180	22 %



CAMBRIDGESHIRE	GB area (ha)	% GB
Cambridge	1,000	24.6 %
South Cambridgeshire	23,190	25.7 %



HERTFORDSHIRE	GB area (ha)	% GB
Broxbourne	3,310	64 %
East Hertfordshire	17,530	37 %
Stevenage	260	10 %

Source: DCLG  
UK Open Government Licence  
Ordnance Survey / OS Open Data

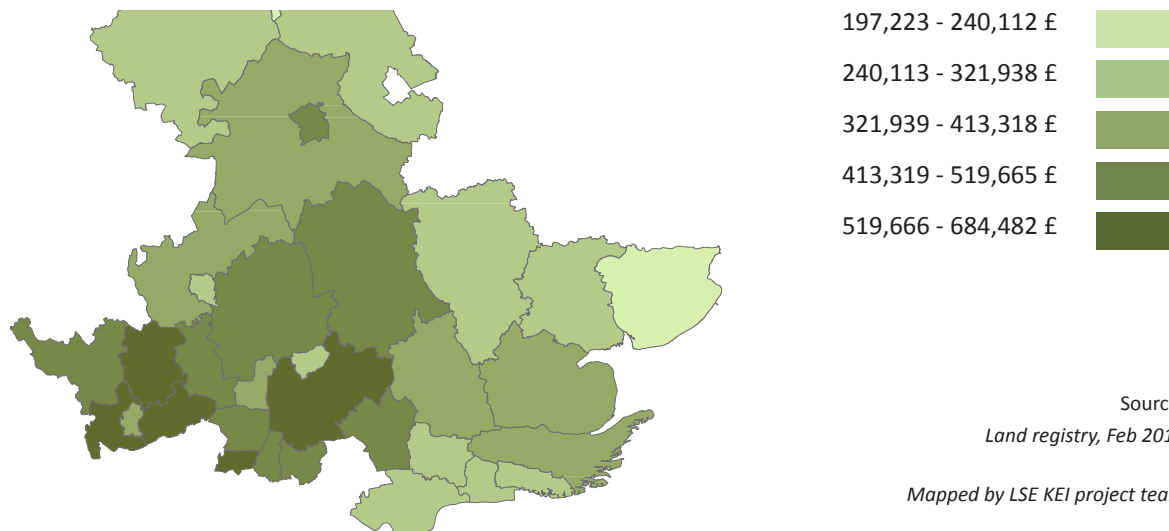
Housing targets | Average housig prices (£) along the Corridor

ESSEX	HOUSING TARGETS	AVERAGE PRICES (£)
Epping Forest	11,300	530,949 £
Harlow	5,900	298,681 £
Uttlesford	12,500	438,534 £

GLA	HOUSING TARGETS [	AVERAGE PRICES (£)
Enfield	18,760	505722 £
Haringey	19,580	684482 £
Redbridge	19,790	454919 £
Waltham Forest	17,940	462150 £

CAMBRIDGESHIRE	HOUSING TARGETS	AVERAGE PRICES (£)
Cambridge	10,069	519,665 £
South Cambridgeshire	17,579	413,318 £

HERTFORDSHIRE	HOUSING TARGETS	AVERAGE PRICES (£)
Broxbourne	37,3507	373,507 £
East Hertfordshire	442,946	442,946 £
Stevenage	286,930	286, 930 £



Source:  
Land registry, Feb 2018

Mapped by LSE KEI project team

The economic rationale for the London Stansted Corridor Consortium's work is set out by their Corridor Growth Commission in the 2016 *The Next Global Knowledge Region: Setting the Ambitions and Delivering the Vision*<sup>21</sup>. This provides detail of the economic importance of the corridor, its potential and threats to this. There is no need to reproduce this here but to give a flavour, the Corridor supports 303,000 jobs in knowledge based industries with productivity 16 per cent above the UK average. The report sets out a vision for 2036; "[t]he London Stansted Cambridge Corridor will be one of the top 5 Global knowledge regions, alongside San Francisco – Silicon Valley, Boston Route 128, and The Triangle. It will be the prime location choice for tech and life sciences firms looking to locate in the UK". While we do not take a position on the vision itself we note that the Corridor Growth Commission identifies a number of risks to future growth.

The report identifies 5 risks some of which have implications for green belt policy.

**Risk 1** | A deteriorating location offer. Failure to develop high quality business locations, attractive new communities to live in and the transport infrastructure to connect them will result in a poorer locational offer with higher costs due to demand pressures, congestion and skills shortages. This will eventually erode the Corridor's advantages, investment profile and productivity.

**Risk 3** | Increased housing pressures could reduce skills supply. Failure to invest in measures to boost housebuilding, such as road and rail transport improvements, will lead to further rises in house prices and worsening affordability. This has major implications for employers and their ability to recruit and retain talent.

**Risk 5** | `Growth in London exerts greater challenges and pressures on localities within the Corridor. The likely potential growth in London is already known. Failure to plan for and manage this growth in ways that benefit local areas within the Corridor could create significant additional challenges and risks such as labour shortages, transport use and congestion, house prices and housing demand, and land prices and land use pressures. Failure to plan outside London may also constrain London's own potential."

21 <http://www.lscggrowthcommission.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/LSCC-Growth-Commission-Final-Report-full.pdf>

The Corridor Growth Commission argue that as sufficient permissions have been granted for housing, land/planning constraint is not the key issue rather the problem is with delivering the housing that has been granted permission. However, this echoes the approach taken in London where the assumption is that all land currently identified for housing will turn into permissions and that all these will be built. As we noted in that case, the evidence is that many permission do not turn into housing and therefore we have either to address this or accept the need to identify more land and grant more permissions than the number of homes we need built. In any case, we argue that the slow rate of turning permissions into housing is partly driven by land constraint and the knowledge that further sites with permission will be hard to acquire. In Alconbury<sup>22</sup> this has overcome by a 'master developer' model where Urban and Civic plc manage the building out of the site, parcelling it out to house builders and so preventing a common problem where a single builder on a large site tends to constrain the rate of output. This may prove to be a useful model for large sites elsewhere in the corridor but it does not negate the case for better strategic planning.

While brownfield sites such as Alconbury will make an important contribution to housing, it is happening where it is because the 1,425 acre site happens to be former Ministry of Defence land and is, therefore, brownfield. While in this case it may be a perfectly adequate location it would be better to have a strategic planning vision for the corridor that looks at where development would best serve economic and social needs rather than being driven only by the availability and location of brownfield sites (in this case an ex airfield so not an inner city site in need of redevelopment). This would take fully into account environmental constraints such as flood risk, Sites of Special Scientific Interest and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty. But where the decision is not constrained by more general green belt restrictions there may be sites closer to Cambridge, or Harlow, or London that would make good sense in terms of using existing infrastructure, proximity to work, demand for housing and so on.

It is not within the scope of this report to propose a strategic plan for the corridor. Rather, in the following section we seek to show how green belt reform might sit within a strategic planning exercise. We indicate how, were a series of urban extensions to be developed, green belt reform might make a positive contribution. While we name settlements to illustrate our point, it is not our role to propose development in specific locations. Rather we are using locations to illustrate some of the elements a strategic review might take into account.

<sup>22</sup> To the north-west of Cambridge, Alconbury, is near to Huntingdon. It will deliver around 7,000 new homes and has already seen the development of a business park.

### 3.3 A new role for green belt in the corridor

The corridor between Cambridge and London is roughly delineated by the A1 and 'Northern Railways/East Coast Mainline' railway to the west and the A10 and 'Greater Anglia' railway line to the east [Fig. 3.2] The corridor approach is not intended to suggest a line of continuous development along major roads and railways. Some settlements would be expanded through urban extensions but would most likely remain separate from other settlements reflecting existing national green belt policy which seeks to maintain openness through keeping settlements separate. However, we suggest that in some cases this assumption might be challenged.

FIG. 3.2 | Initial sketches; potential urban extensions



©Levitt Bernstein

London developed through the merging of multiple existing settlements and many of these still retain a distinct character without maintaining a ring of undeveloped land around each. Therefore, in Figure 3.2 we give the example of Hertford and Ware, where settlements might be allowed to expand into one another (we have not confirmed other restriction, e.g. flood risk, so this is merely indicative of the general point). Under such circumstances our conditions for green belt reform might see enhanced provision of access to open land and/or improved landscaping to necessary sections to lessen the impact of the A10 which already cuts through the green belt that separates the two settlements.

We are not convinced of the case for new free standing settlements on Garden City lines because of the considerable costs of doing so, we return to this point in section four where we consider funding. Therefore in Figure 3.2 we have indicated how housing and commercial uses could be provided through a series of urban extensions. URBED's proposal for Uxchester Garden City<sup>23</sup> offers an example of how the urban extension model might work and, again, we return to this in section four below.

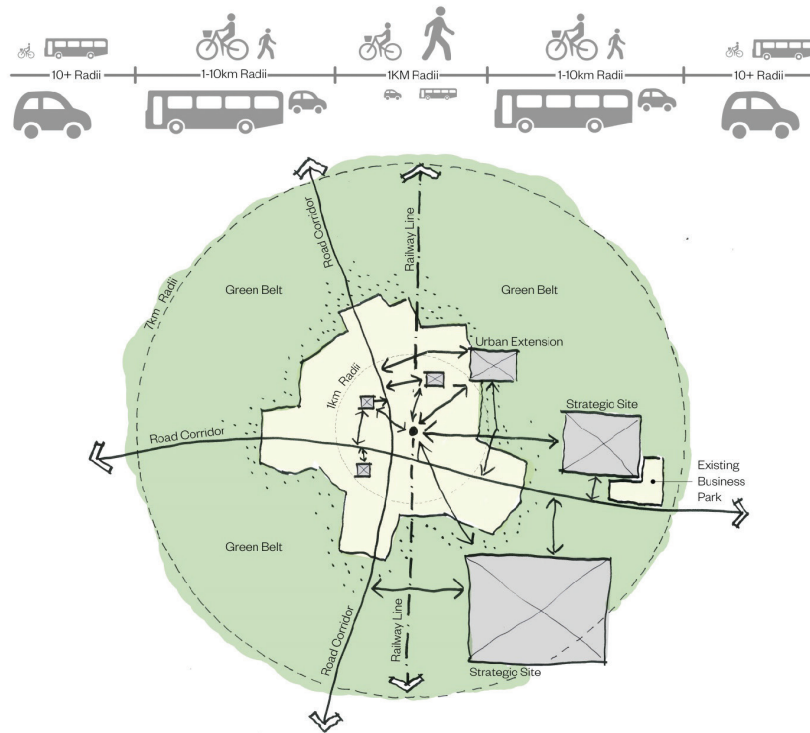
Many existing settlements are already serviced by railway stations and while rail provides a good link between settlements there will always be the need for other modes of transport including the car. We acknowledge that economic and housing development will bring more road traffic to the corridor, but as Figure 3.3 and 3.4 show sensitive urban extensions would support walking, cycling and bus use, particularly where higher densities are focused near to town centres/ railway stations. As the Figure illustrates within a one kilometre radius of the station walking and cycling will dominate as modes of transport with buses and cars having only a minor role. Moving out from a one to ten kilometre radius the bus and car increasingly competes with walking and cycling and almost entirely dominate over ten kilometres.

The example in Figure 3.3 is typical of many settlements in the London-Cambridge corridor as it is serviced by a railway station. However, we do not believe that potential urban extensions should be limited to locations with railway connections. Between the rail lines places such as Puckeridge and Standon are well serviced by main roads and, if the demand for housing is there, we believe such sites should be considered too but where funding should support improvements to bus services to hub people into larger centres with railway stations and other key services.

23 Urbed 2014. <http://urbed.coop/sites/default/files/URBED%20Wolfson%20Submission.pdf>



FIG. 3.3| Transport hierarchies in settlements in the corridor

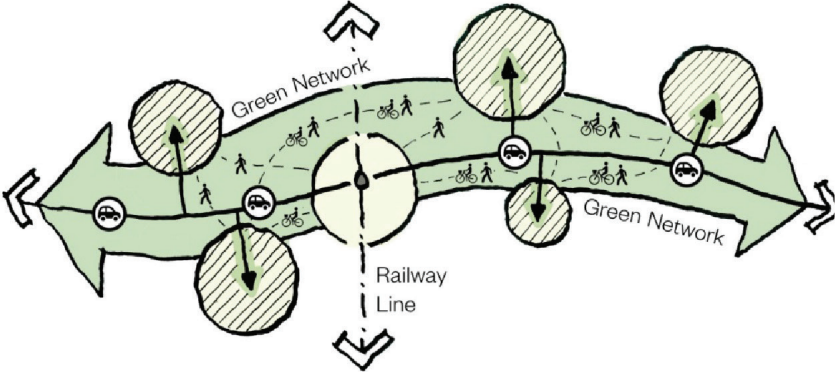


©Levitt Bernstein

Also evident in Figure 3.3 is that we are not only indicating extensions for housing, also included are commercial and other developments. A strategic approach to the corridor could see the development/expansion of further and higher education campuses at different points in the corridor as well as centres for distribution, light manufacturing and so on. The latter land uses increasingly find themselves priced out of London and would benefit from good road and rail connections along the east and west of the corridor.

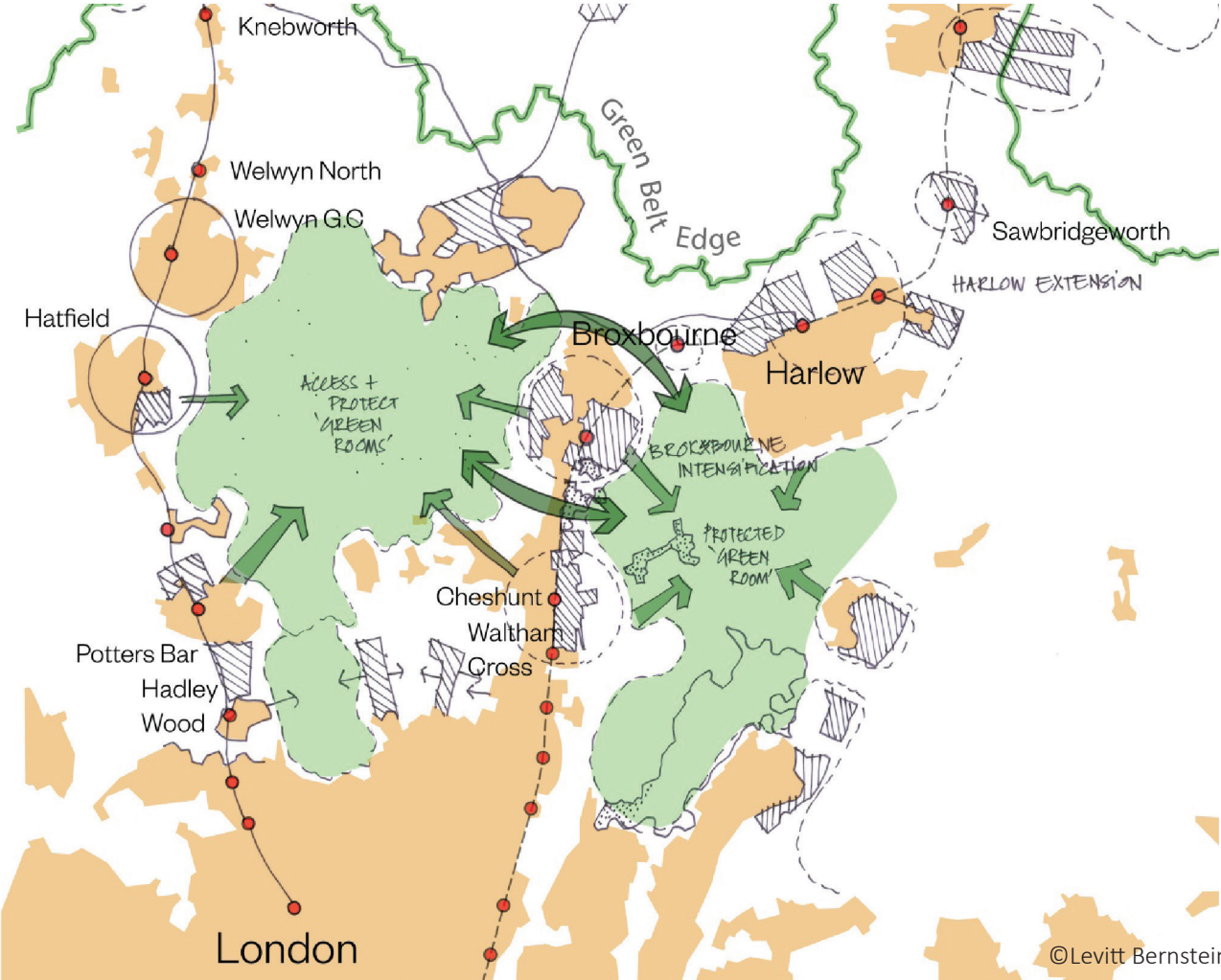
Looking back to Figure 3.2 shows that several settlements such as Royston and Great Chesterford are outside the Cambridge and London green belts. And settlements including Stevenage and Harlow still have some land available for development and potential for densification. Therefore, extending urban areas in the corridor does not always require the use of green belt land. Changing green belt policy would only be required in some circumstances and, as is evident, we are a long way from suggesting any wholesale loss of green belt. Other planning constraints will limit where extensions can take place.

FIG. 3.4 | Accessible green network



©Levitt Bernstein

FIG. 3.5 | 'Green rooms'



©Levitt Bernstein

We argue that a strategic approach to the corridor should be used as an opportunity to rethink the green belt's distribution informed by returning to its purpose. If openness is our absolute priority then we must decide to fix forever all the existing boundaries of our settlements as any urban extension will to some extent impact openness. However, we noted before the policy's original purpose to provide public access to open land, often along green corridors running across a settlement and into the countryside – an approach later put into practice in Harlow. If access to countryside becomes a purpose then options exist when developing urban extensions. In Figure 3.4 we illustrate how prioritising access to green could be employed to create a network of walking and cycle routes between (and within) settlements. Planned at a corridor scale this could provide an ambitious all-corridor offer similar to the Lee Valley Regional Park that runs to the east or the Emscher Landscape Park, part of a planned recovery of former industrial sites along the Ruhr in Germany. Although motivated by a different problem Emscher shows the benefit of coordinated intervention. In the case of the corridor the loss of some openness arising from urban extensions might be set against the benefits of opening up to public access an extensive green corridor-park.

Another approach would be to plan for greater public access through 'green rooms'. These would be micro versions of the Randstad in Holland where a series of cities (Amsterdam, The Hague, Rotterdam and Utrecht) and related transport corridors encircle less developed, more open countryside. 'Green rooms' might be in addition to or form part of a linear landscaped park. An illustration of this model is shown in Figure 3.5 where urban extensions at Broxbourne, Hatfield, Hertford and Potters Bar might help fund greater access to better maintained open land between the settlements.

Although the form of any development is not the central concern of this report our conditions reference the need to optimise density. During the course of the original project we often heard the view that executive homes are not worth sacrificing green belt for. Although, an alternative opinion was that executive homes could also produce a mix of development and greenery. Aside from so-called executive homes, we would not seek to rule out any development of single family homes alongside higher density apartment development. Here we recognise another challenge as low density single home development is probably the form of housing most likely to be acceptable, if not welcomed, as the cases of Long Hanborough and Longford Park in Oxfordshire demonstrate<sup>24</sup>.

24 <https://www.bbc.co.uk/iplayer/episode/b09rf94t/the-new-builds-are-coming-battle-in-the-countryside-series-1-episode-2#>

However, we show in Figures 3.6, 3.7 and 3.8, examples of different forms of development that provide greenery at higher density.

As noted, building at higher density can help support local services by providing a critical mass of population to support, for example, new shops and public transport and can also support affordable housing. In the following section we turn our attention to related aspect of planning gain and its potential to support communities by contributing to the funding services.

FIG. 3.6| Derwenthorpe - Studio Partington



FIG. 3.7| Accordia, Cambridge - FCB Studio



FIG. 3.8| HTA - Officers Field, Weymouth



## 4 | FUNDING & GOVERNANCE

We start with a brief discussion of terminology, which is important for clarity. Planning gain is an aspect of Betterment, which refers to an increase in land value resulting from a number of factors including:

- a) public investment that improves connectivity e.g. a new road or rail station.
- b) the granting of planning permission (planning gain)
- c) the effects of general improvements in the economy

(Based on Crook et al 2016: 16, box 1.1)

In the case of (a) and (b) the increase in land value is the result of public action where without intervention, the landowner will gain from that action without having contributed. This increase might be distinguished from one where a landowner invests in improvement to her/his own land and where the increase in value also returns to her/him. The rise in land value from (b) is also referred to as 'planning gain'. In this section we generally focus on planning gain but the broader term, Betterment, is used when necessary.

There are principled (distributional) reasons for seeking to capture planning gain. It simply seems unfair for a landowner to receive a profit without having to take any particular action/risk. Moreover, where the state grants planning permission some landowners may be enriched by the granting of permission while others who are not granted permission continue only to enjoy the value of the existing use of their land. In the case of green belt, where some land has been designated for up to eight decades and the land is often in high demand areas close to cities, any granting of permission would only serve to highlight the 'unearned' nature of the gain because of the potentially significant increases in value. On 2015 figures one hectare of agricultural land in England costs around £21,000. With planning permission for housing, the average value across England (excluding London), would be £1,958,000 - nearly 95 times more. In reality the value of urban extension land with permission could be far greater, with developable land having values

of: £4,327,000 for Oxford; £5,725,000 for Cambridge; £15,700,000 for Barnet, and; £10,150,000 for Bromley<sup>25</sup>. To be clear, the potential for a great increase in land value, if green belt designation were removed, should not be used as the reason to remove green belt. Rather, where corridor-wide planning suggests a case for some development of green belt we must be sure to capture for public benefit a reasonable part of the increase in value that would follow.

Moreover, existing residents will reasonably resist local development (on or off green belt), where they perceive it will make things worse. If the trains are to be more crowded, roads more congested and waiting times extended for visits to the doctor it is reasonable to seek to prevent this happening. Planning gain can be directed to mitigating these effects by providing funding for such services. Typically, in the case of services funded through taxes such schools and hospitals planning gain can be used to fill the gap in revenue expenditure (e.g. wages), between the time new households move in and the reappraisal of the distribution of national budgets to local services and/or it can fund capital projects such as new schools.

Therefore, capturing planning gain on any green belt development makes reform more acceptable by avoiding huge windfall profits for landowners and developers and by maintaining the quality/availability of services. Furthermore, in the context of green belt reform we have suggested that an element of planning gain should be dedicated to improvements to parts of the remaining green belt. However, achieving any of this depends on the ability to collect planning gain and how much is collected. This is a knotty problem that generates much debate and we cannot do justice to the intricacies of the challenge here. We outline the current options and those being discussed and note that exploring and developing options will be important to delivering successful corridor development, as we see in the case of the nascent Oxford-Milton Keynes- Cambridge corridor.

#### 4.1 Current and possible approaches

The National Infrastructure Commission consulted on its document '*congestion, capacity, carbon: priorities for national infrastructure*'<sup>26</sup> until January 2018; a document intended to lead to a National Infrastructure Assessment. The consultation documents briefly mentions the limitations

25 [www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/407155/February\\_2015\\_Land\\_value\\_publication\\_FINAL.pdf](http://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/407155/February_2015_Land_value_publication_FINAL.pdf)

26 [https://www.nic.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/Congestion-Capacity-Carbon\\_-Priorities-for-national-infrastructure.pdf](https://www.nic.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/Congestion-Capacity-Carbon_-Priorities-for-national-infrastructure.pdf)

of current mechanisms and the need for new ones that convince the public that new development will bring with it sufficient funding for required new services and infrastructure. We are therefore mindful that this is a very fluid policy area and beyond the scope of the project to promote a preferred method.

Currently planning gain is captured through two parallel mechanisms, planning obligations (often called Section 106 Agreements (S106)) & the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL). While S106 has been more successful at raising revenue than preceding systems<sup>27</sup>, this was during a period of strong economic growth. A key weakness of S106 is that developers outbid others for land and then use viability to negotiate down their S106 commitments. The asymmetry of negotiation skills between the public and private sectors puts the former in a relatively weak position but uncertainty is also undesirable for developers. Furthermore, the appeal of S106 to developers – that it is a limited charge directly related to the impact of development - is also a weakness. Planning obligations are closely associated with a particular development, which means it is not possible to ‘pool’ payments from a series of schemes to pay for infrastructure elsewhere.

Because S106 doesn’t do a good job where the pooling of resources for infrastructure is required, and because of the issue of uncertainty at the point of land purchase, the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) was introduced and sits alongside S106. The reason why CIL did not simply replace S106 is rehearsed elsewhere<sup>29</sup>. It allows for some pooling of funds and employs a published charging schedule that sets out the level of charge in advance so potential developers can factor the cost into the land price. However, CIL has not yet proved to be a ready answer to the limitations of S106.

A recent government report reviews the experience of CIL since its introduction in 2010<sup>29</sup>. CIL is not raising as much as anticipated by central or local government, approximately £170m to March 2015 against expectations of £470m to £680m per annum (3.3.1<sup>26</sup>); “It is clear that the potential role of CIL in meeting infrastructure costs has often been overstated resulting in unrealistic expectations amongst local communities as well as developers as to the amount of infrastructure that will be provided. Figures cited by respondents suggest that CIL is yielding between 5% and 20%

27 Crook, T., Henneberry, J., & Whitehead, C. 2016. Planning Gain: Providing Infrastructure & Affordable Housing. Wiley Blackwell: Chichester, West Sussex. 102

28 Crook et al 2016. 63-114

29 CIL Review Team 2016 ‘New Approach Developer Contributors’  
[https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/589637/CIL\\_REPORT\\_2016.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/589637/CIL_REPORT_2016.pdf)

of the funding required for new infrastructure in an area leaving the balance to be found by local authorities who are having to address their own financial challenges” (3.3.2<sup>26</sup>).

A recent recommendation is for a renamed CIL (Local Infrastructure Tariff - LIT), to be set nationally on a formula based on market values measured in £ per sq metre; it would continue to sit alongside S106 and should be compulsory but set at a low rate; and should be raised and spent by the local authority. Where Combined Authority arrangements are in place a Strategic Infrastructure Tariff (SIT) may be raised at a local level and spent via the Combined Authority (similar to the mayoral CIL in London). This suggests some compatibility with a need for a strategic approach to green belt governance that we return to below.

The range of alternative approaches that might be used to capture more effectively the uplift in value from the granting of planning permission include:

- Tariffs rather than negotiations;
- Auctioning of planning permissions;
- Compulsory purchase of land at current value (or plus say, 10%), then resell at market value after providing infrastructure.

The options have been selected as being ‘currently under consideration’<sup>30</sup> and therefore are not intended to represent all possible alternatives.

Tariffs represent an attempt to make more predictable costs to developers so these can be fully factored into the land price. A tariff rather than a negotiated system for S106 is already applied in practice in Milton Keynes. However, the problem with tariffs is that they are complicated and expensive to set up if they are tailored to meet local market conditions – where there may be several rates within a single authority. The Milton Keynes tariff was set up for a particular situation – relatively low density development on greenfield land. The rate doesn’t work for other types of development in Milton Keynes<sup>31</sup>. This reflects the experience of CIL where multiple charging bands have been set up but where the greatest success in terms of revenue raised is where this is a low rate applied overall, which is less likely to be challenged by developers but where potentially higher levels of CIL are sacrificed in some cases. Moreover, in the case of Milton Keynes those administering the scheme have argued that its success depends on the model of delivery where

30 For examples through The House of Lords Economic Affairs Committee:

31 <http://www.building.co.uk/planning-tariff-will-fail-if-based-on-milton-keynes-roof-tax/3098044.article>



the Milton Keynes Partnership and not the local authority administer it, illustrating links between funding and governance.

In a recent report, Transport for London (TfL) looks at the auctioning of planning permissions (in this case to capture value to fund public transport)<sup>32</sup>, but the method might be used to raise funds for other infrastructure, affordable housing and so on. Quoting from their report, TfL describe the key features of their 'development rights auction model' as follows:

- “The integrated planning and consenting of land use and density in a defined zone around a major new transport facility, in parallel with the planning of the transport scheme;
- The introduction of a periodic development rights auction, in which development rights over land put forward (voluntarily) by landowners are auctioned in assembled packages to a competitive field of developers. Gains above a reserve price are shared between the participating landowners and the planning/auctioning authority. No development taxes (such as CILs or s106 payments) are payable under this scheme. All non-operational but developable public sector-owned land within the zone is entered into the auction as part of a standard public sector land pooling arrangement
- The introduction of a high zonal CIL for those landowners who wish to self-develop rather than participate in the auction
- The use of reformed compulsory purchase order (CPO) powers (following successful passage of the Neighbourhood Planning Bill 2016) to deal with holdout problems that threaten to stall development, together with further consideration of other options as discussed in the report.”

The TfL proposal seeks to incentivise landowners to engage with development near to new infrastructure and brings the private and public sectors into partnership, with possibilities for more planned/strategic approaches to development – including assisting the public sector in coordinating the timing of development.

The intent of TfL's auctioning option is to encourage land owners to co-operate with the public sector including through varied levels of CIL. This represents a method strongly to encourage joint ventures but these can and do happen without the auctioning mechanism. In the corridor the borough of Broxbourne is one example of an authority that has set up a subsidiary company Badger BC Investments that funds part of the Council's activities through property investment. Another

32 Transport for London 2017. 'Land value capture, final report, executive summary'. Online. [https://www.london.gov.uk/sites/default/files/land\\_value\\_capture\\_executive\\_summary\\_transport\\_for\\_london.pdf](https://www.london.gov.uk/sites/default/files/land_value_capture_executive_summary_transport_for_london.pdf)

example in the corridor is Cambridge City Council that in 2007 announced it had established a 50/50 investment with Hill Investment Partnerships to fund the redevelopment of council-owned land to provide housing.

In their report on auctioning permissions TfL note the need for reforms to the CPO system, including the possibility for 'no scheme' valuations. A change in CPO law could be considered (possibly in the particular context of development on former green belt land), allowing for the acquisition of land at its present use value with limited compensation (say 10%), for anticipated increases in value following proposals for development.

## 4.2 Governance

We close by raising briefly the issue of mechanisms for strategic planning in the corridor. We highlight this as an issue for two reasons, first, we have made great play of the advantage of a co-ordinated approach to green belt as a regional policy. Current arrangements only allow for reviews at the local level and so miss out on the benefit of a more coordinated approach including joining up access to open land to provide walking and cycling corridors along the Lea River or Emscher Landscape Park model. Second, capturing planning gain may in many cases be more effective if coordinated across multiple authorities.

The government is increasingly encouraging regional planning in all but name and, as already mentioned, the National Infrastructure Commission is promoting corridor-wide planning in particular through the Oxford-Cambridge corridor. We briefly outline other changes and their source to indicate possibilities for the Cambridge-London corridor. Already existing is the ability to form a combined authority, "a legal body set up using national legislation that enables a group of two or more councils to collaborate and take collective decisions across council boundaries"<sup>33</sup>.

A Government commissioned CIL review team proposed a Strategic Infrastructure Tariff Model. "We recommend that provision is made for Combined Authorities to agree the imposition of a low level 'Mayoral' type Strategic Infrastructure Tariff to be imposed across the Combined Authority area. ... We recommend that further consideration is given to enabling Combined Authorities to use the Strategic Infrastructure Tariff funding as a mechanism for raising additional finance"<sup>34</sup>.

33 <https://www.local.gov.uk/sites/default/files/documents/combined-authorities-plai-fb6.pdf>

34 Section 5.3.3; 2017, A new approach to developer contributions

The Housing White Paper draws on two other government sources<sup>35</sup> in announcing an intention to encourage cross authority planning, “...we will remove the policy expectation that each local planning authority should produce a single local plan. We will make clear instead that authorities should identify the most effective way of setting out their key strategic priorities (which may be jointly with other authorities)...”<sup>36</sup>

This emerging bespoke approach to encouraging strategic (regional) planning could prove fruitful. It avoids the traditional imposition of fixed regional planning bodies and so could be more supportive of a corridor based approach. However, the ability of such a system to deliver corridor planning is yet to be fully tested.




#### UXCESTER GARDEN CITY



#### BOX 5

URBED’s prize-winning proposal for Uxcester Garden City provides a closely worked out model both for financing an urban extension and for related governance where a ‘garden city foundation’ would govern the scheme – being a partnership of local authorities, civic groups, universities and local employers. A separate ‘garden city land company’ would be a vehicle for managing the land and Betterment flowing from development. This would oversee funding for land purchases that could come through shareholdings including landowners deferring payments and a share issues available to individual and institutional investors. We see much to commend the URBED model and our project is not of sufficient scope to add greatly to this. We simply note the importance of willing partners in a pioneer corridor addressing both planning gain, where legislative change would be required for a number of options and cooperative governance arrangements where there is considerably more flexibility than under current legislation.



35 Neighbourhood Planning Act 2017

36 Section A16 [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/590464/Fixing\\_our\\_broken\\_housing\\_market\\_-\\_print\\_ready\\_version.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/590464/Fixing_our_broken_housing_market_-_print_ready_version.pdf)

## 5 | CONCLUSION

The green belt is an enduring regional policy in a country without regional planning. It strongly influences where development takes place independent of housing and economic needs. A corridor approach is one of the ways in which we see a return to regional planning (without naming it such). Most recently we see this in the draft London Plan which recognises the importance of corridors running into and out of London. However, the draft plan fails to take the opportunity to rethink green belt in response to corridor planning – this is a missed opportunity.

With renewed focus on the form and function of the UK's economy the need to nurture high performing sectors is evident. If high performing life science businesses cannot find the right workspace and their employees housing in the WSE, growth is as likely overseas as in another part of the UK. The work of the London Stansted Corridor Consortium and of the National Infrastructure Commission on the Cambridge-Milton Keynes-Oxford Corridor/Arc reflect an awareness of the importance of coordinated planning for the economic health of these linear regions. Rethinking green belt within corridors including offering the possibility of a new role for it, positively supporting new patterns of development in the corridor rather than negatively fixing settlement boundaries as they are.

Green belt should continue as a regional policy, but reformed to work more harmoniously with corridor-region development. This means moving away from the current visual purpose of openness and focusing instead on the under-realised potential of the green belt to provide public access to high quality green space, including to corridors of green serving as a network of distance walking and cycling routes connecting settlements across the corridor. Improved access to green belt and improvements to the quality of that green belt are existing government aspirations (but not policy), that indicate an unmet need<sup>37</sup> If realised, this would serve to compensate existing residents for the loss of openness that urban extensions will entail.

37 Ministerial Forward, NPPF 2012;  
[https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/6077/2116950.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/6077/2116950.pdf)

Changing green belt policy would lead to substantial increases in land value that must be directed to public benefit to justify the reform. Existing residents will logically resist new development if it brings no discernible benefit or worse still, leads to greater pressure on existing facilities and services. We must ensure, therefore, that other infrastructure and services such as railways and schools are sufficiently provided for, leading to no worse an offer to existing residents and preferably leading to improved services. This investment has a double benefit, it is essential to persuade existing residents to accept change and it provides the infrastructure, services and housing to support economic expansion in the corridor.

## FUNDING AND CONTRIBUTORS

Our funding is designed to encourage the communication of research beyond academic networks, using innovative approaches to sharing. To achieve this we have presented to public meetings, met with officers and members in the London-Cambridge corridor, organised workshops and with Levitt Bernstein and the London Stansted Cambridge Consortium have developed proposals for a pioneer corridor project.

All contributions were made on an individual basis; the views expressed do not necessarily represent those of the organizations that contributors are associated with.

We have included their affiliation below but they all contributed in a personal capacity. The content of the report does not necessarily reflect either their individual views or those of their organisation. While many people have contributed their time and expertise we give particular mention to the following for their key contribution to the project:

*June Barnes* [consultant]

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