



Learning sustainable urbanism lessons from 'other' New Towns in the UK: Contributing to design for health and wellbeing in the postwar British New Towns (and beyond)

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Our contention

In exploring contribution of New Towns to health, housing and wellbeing it is useful to widen out scope of what can be defined as a New Town. This allows learning from other contemporary New Town forms in reshaping both post war New Towns and other places including new 'Garden City model sympathetic' settlements

We argue that we can also learn from successful but somewhat 'othered' New Towns such as Poundbury in Dorchester and exemplar schemes elsewhere

In the context of critical sustainability issues at global and UK level, a potential contribution of 'other' New Towns to meet contemporary challenges in making and retrofitting sustainable places, should be acknowledged and explored

This paper therefore draws out such lessons on planning, urban design and retrofitting with view to contributing to discussion of New Towns today in relation to maximising health, housing and wellbeing for all.

Unpacking Poundbury (One)

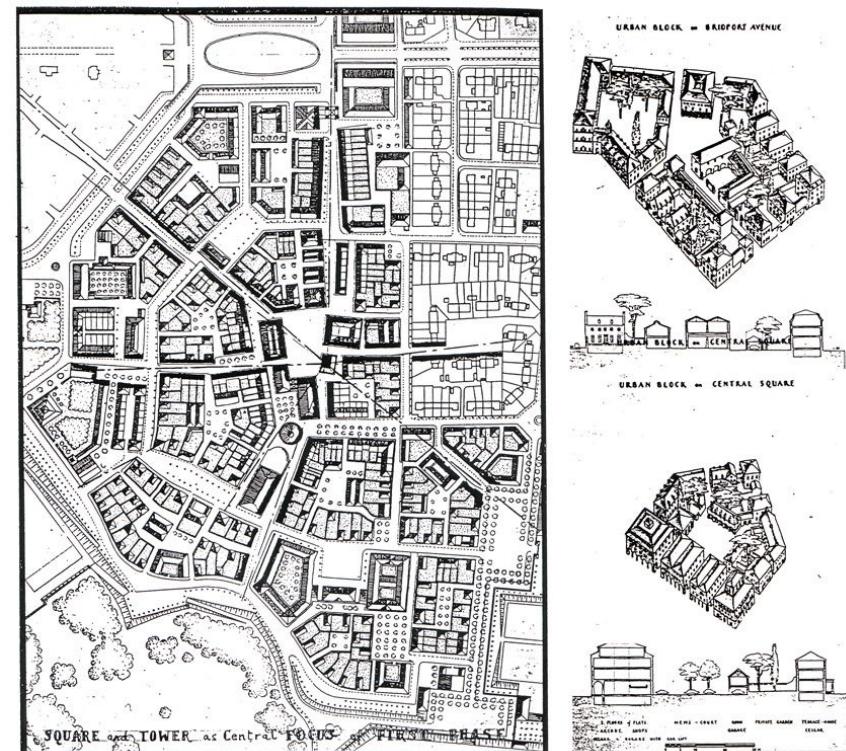
Poundbury can be seen as a planned town, staged in phases over time, in form of a Sustainable Urban Extension/New Town hybrid adjoining Dorchester

A small place with proposed 5,800 population when fully built out by 2026

As a New Town has resonances with early C18th Georgian models, spa towns of C18th/C19th and C20th planned settlement model of the Garden City

Also strong connections to compact, mixed use, walkable placemaking of European City Model (ECM)

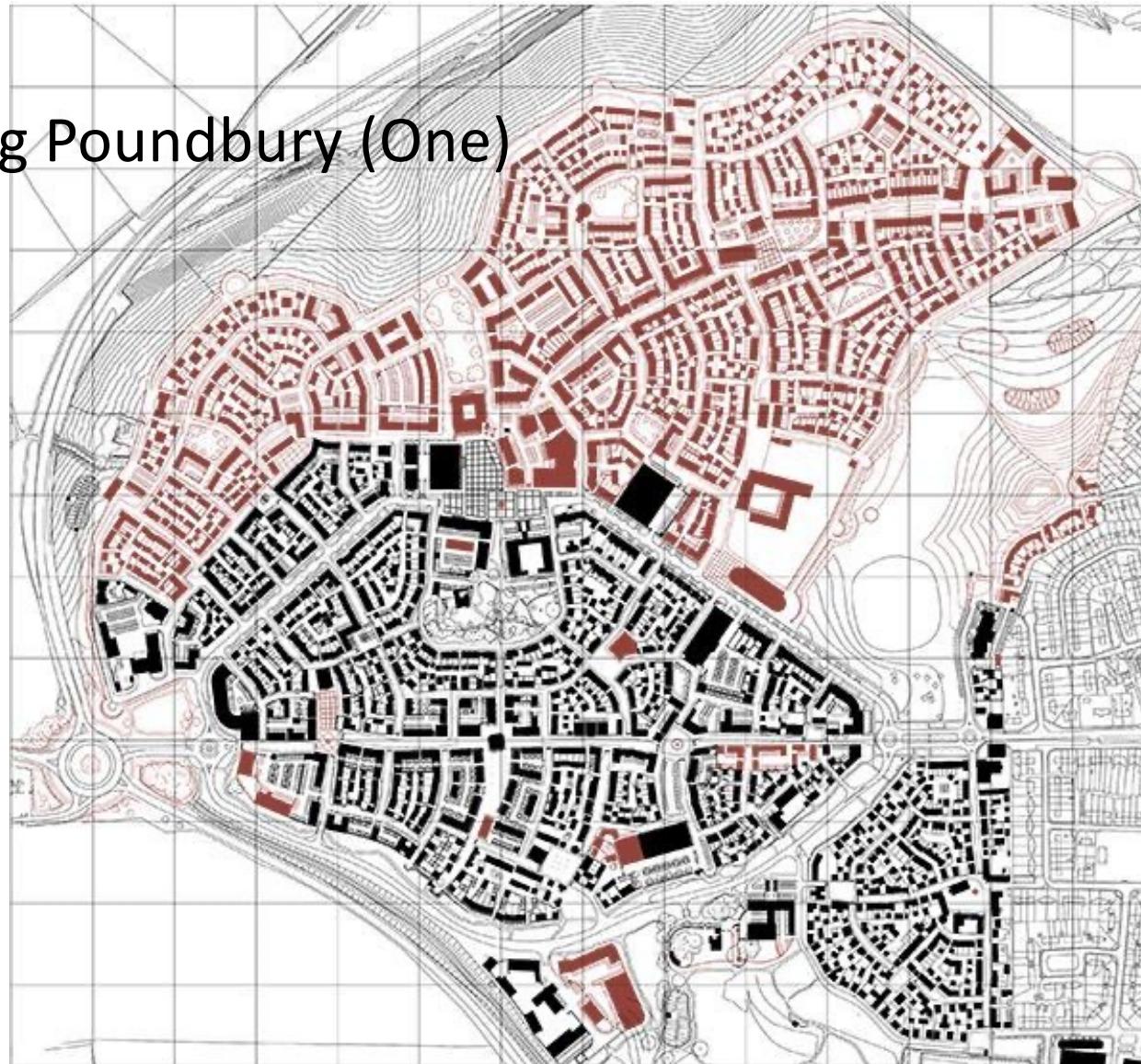
Built by the Duchy of Cornwall to Leon Krier's masterplan



Early sketch of Stage 1

Unpacking Poundbury (One)

Leon Krier
masterplan of
Poundbury as
built to date



Date: 16-IV-2013

LEON KRIER
MASTERPLANNER

Echelle: 1:2000

Unpacking Poundbury (Two)

As a neo-traditional New Town, Poundbury has been widely acclaimed as a success economically, socially and environmentally (Aslet, 2003; Borrer, 1998; Greenwood, 2015; Hardy, D. 2006; Howell, 1997; Jones, 2015; Powers, 2013; Spring, 2000; Wainwright, 2016; Watson *et al*, 2004; Watson, 2014)

Creating a place that is judged popular, sustainable and financially viable (Thompson-Fawcett, 2003; Mulholland, 2003; Watson *et al.*, 2005; Watson, 2014) is a substantial achievement for a New Town, in a housing market beset by factors which generally produce mono-functional, car-dependent and poorly-connected dormitory estates - not places that are towns (Carmona, 2020; Transport for New Homes, 2022)

Poundbury has produced a walkable, compact, and arguably sustainable, New Town urbanism

Poundbury as ‘othered’ new town space

Poundbury also the target of sustained range of othering perspectives: academic (Allen, 2005; Bayley, 2003; Darley, 2008; Markovich, 2015); from architectural practitioners, and in architectural media (Hawkey, 2000; McGuirk, 2009; Pilkington, 1998; Prestage, 2006; Rogers, 1995)

These discourses are studied elsewhere by the authors:

Hardy M. 2019, “Urban growth”, in Emily Talen (ed), *A Research Agenda for New Urbanism*. Cheltenham: Edward Elgar, 124-138

Sadoux, Parham and Hardy, 2022 (forthcoming), *Repairing the Suburbs: The Socio-Spatial Dimension of Anglo American Traditional Urbanism*.

Poundbury as ‘othered’ new town space

Described as ‘pastiche’, ‘nostalgia’, ‘backward-looking’, ‘frozen architecture’

These perspectives have constituted an orthodoxy especially within architecture

We have seen Poundbury marginalised from some sustainable urbanism discourses including some about learning lessons from New Towns

At the same time, at level of practice, those living and working in Poundbury tended to be extremely positive about it despite the architecture which so outrages architectural opinion (Thompson-Fawcett, 2003; Watson *et al*, 2004; Watson, 2014).

A photograph of a street lined with classical-style buildings. On the left, a building with a dark teal facade and light-colored trim features a prominent bay window with white shutters. Next to it is a yellow building with a classical portico. Further down the street, there are more buildings in various colors like white, light blue, and cream, some with arched windows. A few cars are parked along the curb. The sky is overcast.

“they represent the yearning for the past - and its implicit rejection of the mess of modern life - that irritates many people about the Prince's vision of Britain”

Sophie Campbell, 2003

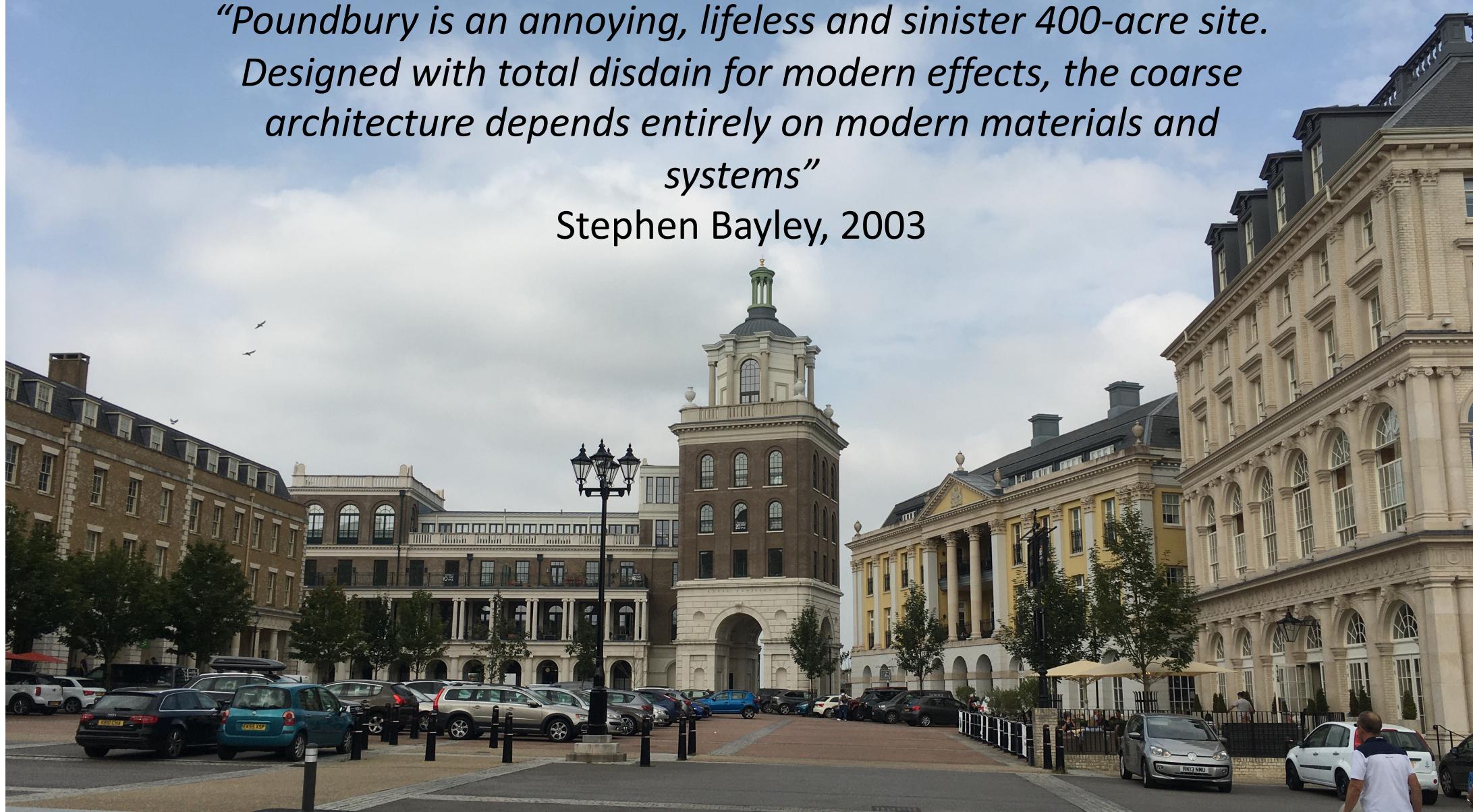


"The cars may also rev, but you cannot see them. Like the bins, vehicles are shooed out of sight so that nothing rude and modern may compromise the ingratiating saccharine idyll that is Poundbury"

Stephen Bayley, 2003

*“Poundbury is an annoying, lifeless and sinister 400-acre site.
Designed with total disdain for modern effects, the coarse
architecture depends entirely on modern materials and
systems”*

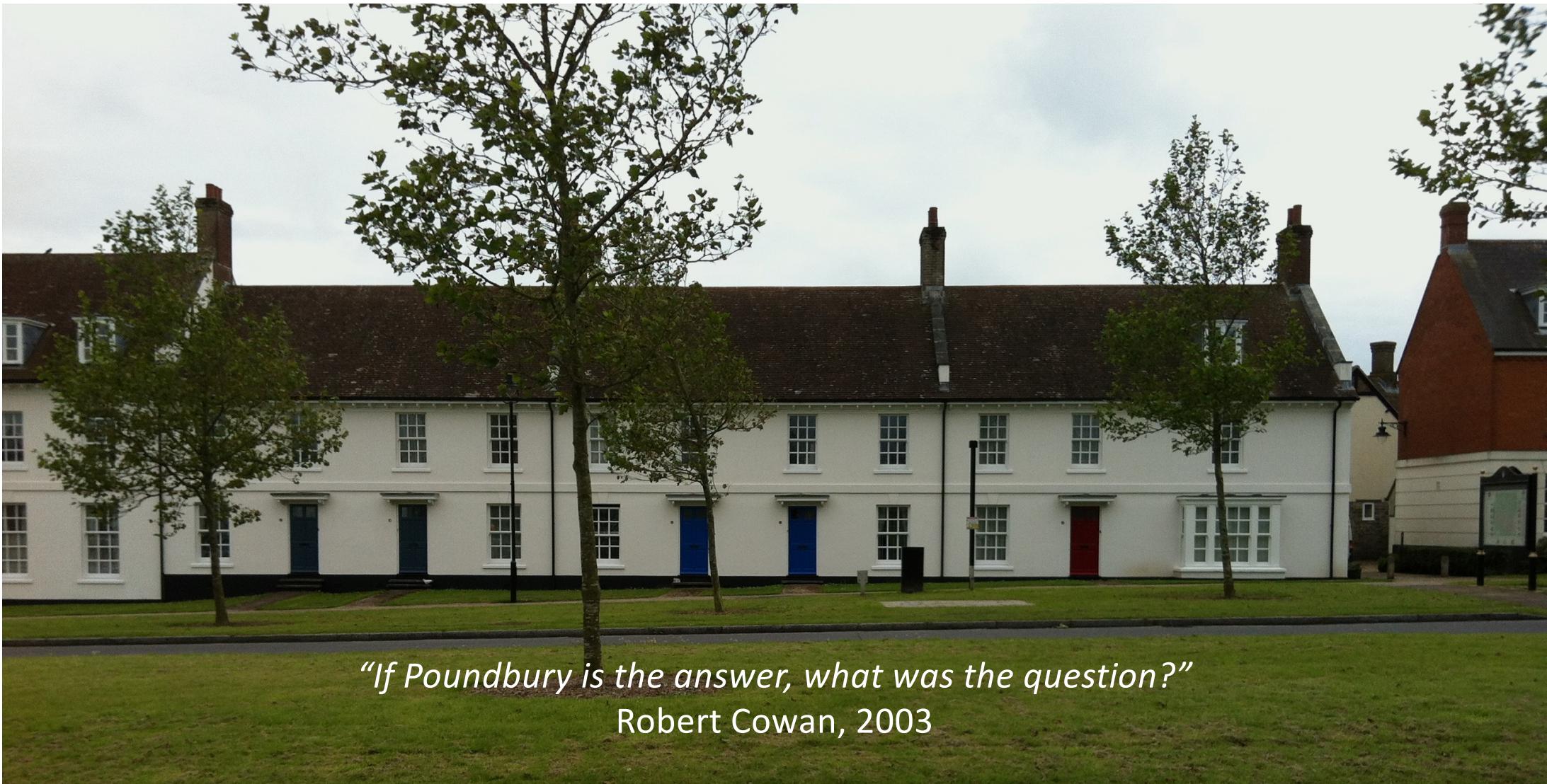
Stephen Bayley, 2003





“A nowhere- town with a bad case of that peculiarly English disease, nostalgia. A village in the rich tradition of English planned communities, yet a symbol of a smug Middle-England bolted onto the very real working town of Dorchester. How at the start of the twenty first century have we ended up with such a backward-looking mess?”

Stuart Freedman, 2013



"If Poundbury is the answer, what was the question?"
Robert Cowan, 2003



“Even though I don’t go to the Residents Association Meetings, or the Wine Tasting or Line Dancing clubs (no, really), there is a small enough and active enough population to get to know your neighbours.

I can (and do) walk to work, the corner shop, the butchers, doctors, dentists, swimming pool, my allotment and one of many natty little gift shops should I feel the need”

Katherine Jones, 2015

Poundbury: an industry exemplar

Duchy's Rainbarrow Farm CHP plant using agricultural and domestic kitchen waste to generate biogas for supply to Poundbury and beyond
Thermal efficiency of building envelopes exceeded regulatory requirements at every stage of the build-out

Duchy of Cornwall (nd) *Case Study, Poundbury: Implementing a Sustainable Energy System*

"In Poundbury, the masterplan for the overall scheme delivers higher densities within a walkable neighbourhood, which promotes healthier lifestyles, helps support the local shops and increases land value... New build values are up to 29% higher than on other new build schemes in the area on a type for type basis in the past year".

Richard Rees (2016) *Spotlight: The Value of Placemaking*. London: Savills

Poundbury: an industry exemplar

“Poundbury increased the local GVA (Gross Value Added) by £ 98 million per annum (predicted to be £ 105m per annum when completed in c2025).”

Dorset County Council (2018) *Poundbury economic impact assessment*

“The latest business survey in 2019 found that over 2,306 people are working in 207 businesses.”

Duchy of Cornwall (2019) *Poundbury Factsheet June 2019.*

Poundbury: difficulty of reproducing the model

“Unfortunately, the current housing industry is geared towards delivering zoned housing estates that create the need for more energy use, increase carbon emissions and foster sedentary lifestyles. These estates take up a great deal of land and are expensive to maintain, in terms of infrastructure and energy cost, because they have been built around cars and not people.”

The Prince's Foundation (2017) *Building a legacy, a landowner's guide to popular development*. London: TPF.



Poundbury: difficulty of reproducing the model

“All of the amenities which a society needs to function — primary schools, shops, public transport and green spaces — should ideally be within comfortable walking distance so that people can live wholesome and sociable lives.

“The obvious answer is to create popular development that delivers ‘walkable neighbourhoods’ with strong local identities, encouraging healthy lifestyles and minimal resource consumption.

“We intuitively know this is right, and yet somehow collectively lack the conviction to make it happen.”



Poundbury: architectural style

"No one selected a tower block as their favourite, and only 2% of people chose a modern loft-style apartment"

Booth, Robert (2003) *Make mine a bungalow*. London: Building Design.

Which would you most like to live in?

1	Bungalow	30%
2	Village house	29%
3	Victorian terrace	16%
4	Modern semi	14%
5	1930s semi	6%
6=	Modern apartment (brick)	1%
	Modern apartment (glass)	1%
	Modern social (terraced)	1%
9	Council towers, council low-rise, 1970s terrace, modern social flats	0%

Lofts and high-rise rejected as public shuns high-density plan

Make mine a bungalow

Tim Hyam & Robert Booth

The general public has delivered a fresh blow to the government's struggling policy of building high-density housing in the UK this week by declaring that bungalows are their most sought-after houses.

In a survey that suggests policy makers' dreams of almost doubling the number of dwellings per hectare in most of the UK are a nightmare for residents, Cabe found that low-density bungalows and village houses are the favourites of six out of 10 people. No one selected a tower block as their favourite, and only 2% of people chose a modern loft-style apartment. A massive 84% said a council tower block was the building they would least like to live in.

The public's rejection of high-density drew accusations of "selfishness" from Manchester architect Ian Simpson, who won a Housing Design Award this week for his design for a 38-storey residential development in Birmingham, the kind of scheme rejected by the public.

He said the result of the survey showed the need to persuade people to change their expectations of housing. "The English mentality is of a detached house with a garden," he said. "But it is a nonsense to think that everyone should have a quarter acre space with a bungalow in it. All

Loved & loathed



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vide a product that enough people are willing to buy into," at a time of "a major housing crisis" with the need for accommodation for 4 million additional households in the next 25 years.

He urged the industry to design 21st century equivalents of Victorian terraces and 1930s semi-detached houses because of their enduring popularity.

"House-builders need to pull their socks up and take account of the fact that people see value in good design and that this will attract them to modern housing," he said. "We have had enough of the ticky-tacky boxes which volume house builders have thrown up with little care or thought."

Terry Farrell, who is campaigning for better volume housebuilding, said: "There are simply not enough examples of high-quality good design in the volume house building market at the moment."

The poll findings represent a blow to the government's goal of building between 30 and 50 dwellings per hectare. It is already failing to meet this everywhere outside London, with just 22-26 dwellings being built on each hectare in the regions.

The survey also revealed that many people do see design as important, with 72% saying that well designed houses will increase in value quicker than average.

See page 4; Leader page 7

Poundbury: architectural style

“History and memory can play an important role in making a place feel beautiful. There tends to be a preference for older buildings over newer ones – for a variety of reasons that go beyond purely visual taste. Whilst visual appreciation is mostly viewed as subjective, there are some areas of consensus. People tend to perceive modern buildings as bland and feel they have received less effort and care in their design and construction than older buildings.”

“People’s overall ability to appreciate beauty is affected by whether they feel comfortable, safe and included in a place. Hence when there is a shared history, feeling of community and pride in a place, people are more likely to say they experience beauty there.”

Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment (2010) *People and Places: public attitudes to beauty*. London: Ipsos Mori.

Poundbury: architectural style

“The ability of architectural design to influence individuals’ physiological and psychological states is an extension of the biophilic connection to nature. Expression of this connection through biophilic design in architecture has occurred throughout history, not always consciously, or even acknowledged, conveying a subjectiveness that testifies to its inherent quality in humans. Nature can be mimicked by using the patterning, forms, materials, symbols and spaces that represent nature and evoke similar responses” (Söderlund and Newman 2021:952).

Jana Söderlund and Peter Newman (2021, 952) Biophilic architecture: a review of the rationale and outcomes. *AIMS Environmental Science*, 2(4): 953.

Poundbury: architectural style

Genealogy of the House

30 A.D.



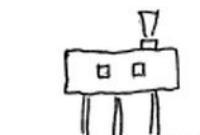
1030 A.D.



1830 A.D.



1930 A.D.



2030 A.D.



TEMPORARY REFUSAL of the ARCHETYPE

Leon Krier

Learning lessons? The othered corpus

There is now a corpus of work from which to draw lessons from for both new places and for retrofitting existing New Towns:

Built exemplar masterplanned schemes often based on charrette or EbD engagement processes such as: Nansledan, Sherford (Cornwall); Tornagrain, Chapelton of Elsick, Longniddry (Scotland); Coed Darcy (Wales); Cambourne, Upton (England)

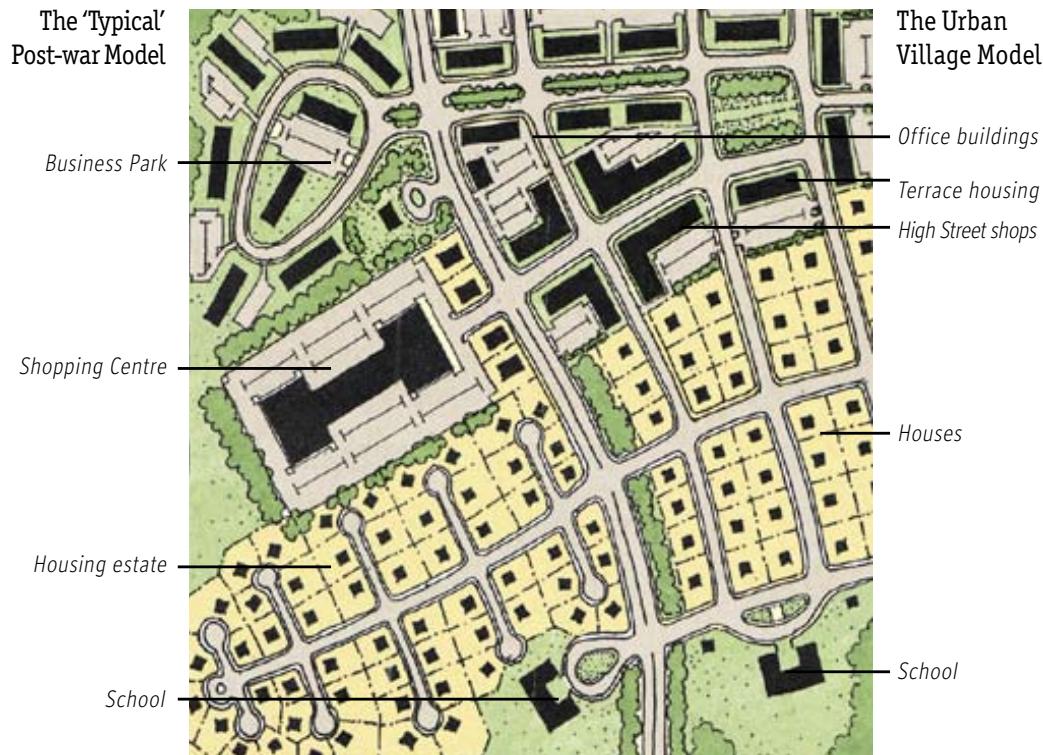
Using Pattern Books, Design Codes, Transects and other New Urbanist methods

Worked scenarios such as *The Hertfordshire Guide to Growth* (2008) and *Guide to Growth Five Years On* (2013); Wolfson Prize (2014); Reimagining the Garden City Competition (Letchworth GCHF/RIBA, 2018)

National U.K. policy, strategy and structures, National Design Guide (2019), National Model Design Code (2021), Office for Place (2021 onwards)

Learning lessons? The othered corpus

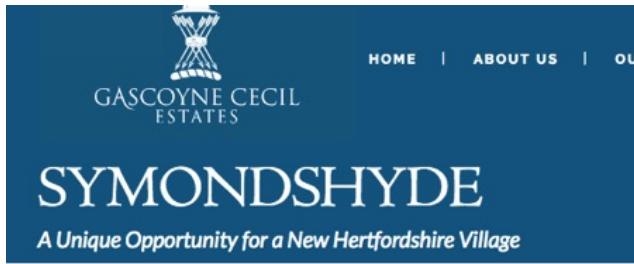
Herts Guide to Growth (2008) Urban Village Model vs the typical Postwar Model



The diagram to the left depicts two models of growth, the post-war suburban pattern, which is currently common within the County and the 'Urban Village' pattern, which has numerous historic precedents in Britain.

The suburban model (depicted on the left side), features cul-de-sacs and collector roads which rarely connect to the greater network. Shopping centres and office parks exist as isolated entities, with separate access to the main roads and no direct connections to the nearby residential areas. Landscaping is not continuous throughout the development, with trees primarily serving as buffers. This approach to development isolates the housing and can lead to an unwarranted dependence on the car. The Urban Village model (depicted on the right side) accommodates a similar number of residential and commercial units. Housing is accommodated on a network, which offers residents alternative routes to most destinations. Retail and offices are allocated within a high street. This approach to development not only lessens dependency on cars; it can foster a sense of community and local identity.

Learning lessons? The othered corpus



[http://www.gascoynececil.com
/symondshyde/](http://www.gascoynececil.com/symondshyde/)



<https://chapeltonnewtown.co.uk/>

Learning lessons? The othered corpus

Nansledan, Newquay
Image from TWP website

Learning lessons? The othered corpus

Sherford



Learning lessons? Government guidance



Living with Beauty Report (January 2020)

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/living-with-beauty-report-of-the-building-better-building-beautiful-commission>

Learning lessons? Government guidance

National Design Guide

Planning practice guidance for beautiful, enduring and successful places



Ministry of Housing,
Communities &
Local Government

National Design Guide

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/843468/National_Design_Guide.pdf

Learning lessons? Government guidance



National Model Design Code

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/national-planning-policy-framework-and-national-model-design-code-consultation-proposals>

Not learning lessons? The norm



Newton Leys



Not learning lessons? The norm

Newton Leys

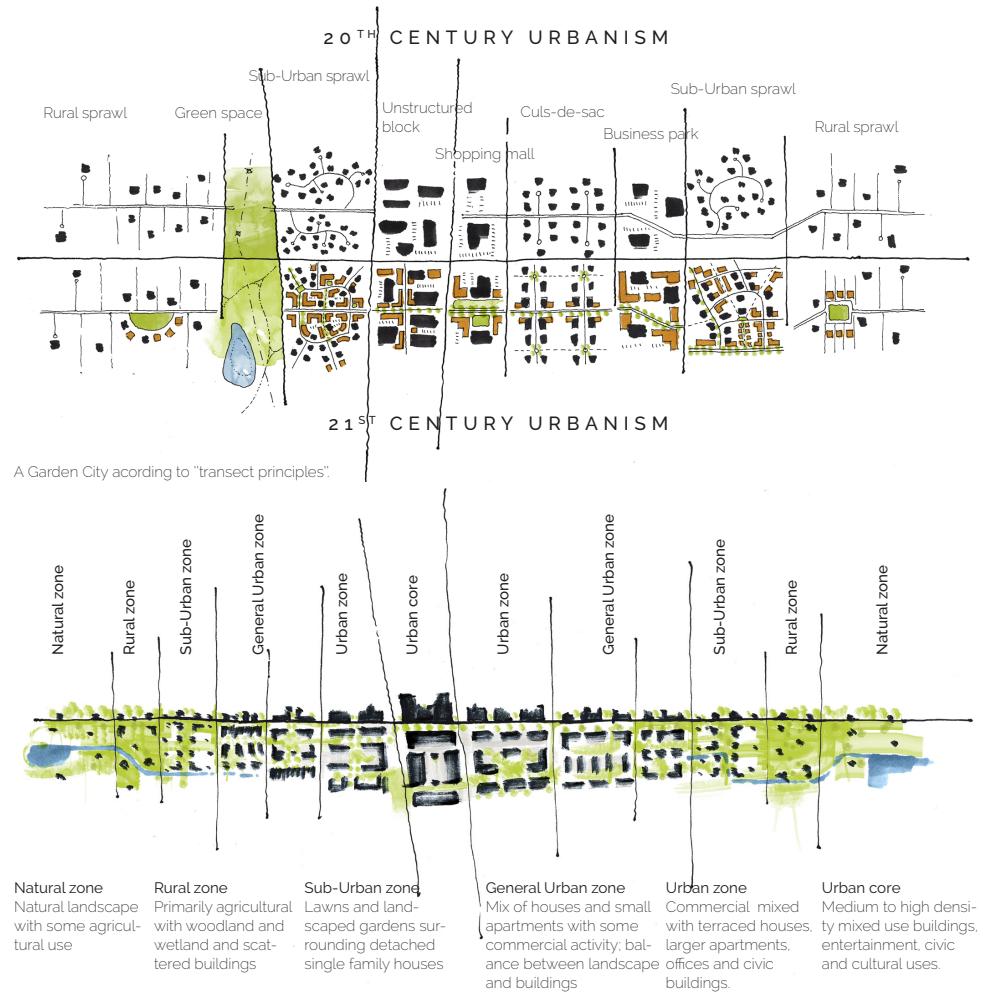
Where might these place making lessons be applied?

As noted in Wolfson prize bid (Parham, Downs, Murray and Fernandez, 2014) all of these offer an opportunity to draw positive lessons for:

1. The challenges of re-design and retrofit that the (post war) New Towns now face
2. For proposed new garden cities, towns and villages and other new developments to come
3. For retrofitting modernist suburbia that is the sibling to postwar New Town place shaping

What place making shifts are implied?

Wolfson Prize proposal (Parham, Downs, Murray and Fernandez, 2014)



This urban-to-rural transect hierarchy has appropriate building and street types for each area along the continuum.

In conclusion

Absolutely critical to focus on health, wellbeing and housing for sustainable urbanism reasons

Many possibilities for retrofitting existing New Towns and making new ones

We should learn from the widest possible range of sources and inspirations

Post war new towns have already changed substantially in their evolution from the Mark One to the Mark Three versions from the 1940s to 1960s – and beyond

New places will benefit from a diversity of architectural expressions

Need to continue to be living, changing towns where the focus is on sustainable place-making that reflects human needs



Thanks for your attention!

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