**Green belts and urban containment: The Merseyside experience**

***Abstract***

The green belt, without question the most well-known and influential legacy of town and country planning in the UK, continues to attract interest from a wide range of interested parties – from those eager to maintain the protection it offers to the countryside, to others more concerned at the negative impacts it is argued to have on housing supply and consequently prices. In this paper we explore how the arguments for a green belt around a particular city in the UK – Liverpool – were built up over the middle years of the twentieth century, in particular through three important (sub-)regional plans. Analysis of those plans is situated within national policy and nationwide rhetoric to illustrate how perfectly justifiable arguments about the need to limit urban sprawl “baked in” resentment and opposition to much-needed housing growth. A situation which, as the final section of the paper briefly reflects upon, not only contributed to the wide-scale construction of high-rise flats in the city from the 1950s onwards, but continues to resonate today through the objections lodged against attempts to enhance the spatial footprint of the city through development on the green belt.

**Introduction**

The green belt is of perennial interest to planning scholars, from the earliest mentions of green belts, girdles, wedges and other variations,[[1]](#footnote-1) through various proposals and actions to limit urban sprawl in the 1930s,[[2]](#footnote-2) analyses of their implementation as a formal part of British planning policy in 1955,[[3]](#footnote-3) and to more recent discussions.[[4]](#footnote-4) These contributors are not merely interested in the green belt because it is an unusual example of a planning policy which has endured for so long and had such international influence – though it is noteworthy for those reasons – but because it has, since its inception, embodied a number of contradictions. One of those contradictions is the focus of this paper – the tension between limiting the growth of urban areas and meeting the increasing need for homes of a population that is both growing in size and seeing a reduction in household size.

Peter Hall and colleagues explored this tension in 1973 in *The Containment of Urban England*. Hall *et al.* argued that the key failure was in not matching the implementation of the green belt and similar ‘containment’ approaches with the corresponding development of a great number of new towns beyond the green belt, as envisaged by the architects of the British planning system.[[5]](#footnote-5) This had a number of negative consequences, including the increasing separation of jobs and homes and undesirably high urban densities. They concluded:

None of this was in the minds of the founding fathers of the planning system. They cared very much for the preservation and the conservation of rural England, to be sure. But that was only part of a total package of policies, to be enforced in the interests of all by beneficent central planning. …It certainly was not the intention of the founders that people should live cramped lives in homes destined for premature slumdom, far from urban services or jobs; or that city dwellers should live in blank cliffs of flats, far from the ground, without access to playspace for their children. Somewhere along the way, a great deal was lost, a system distorted and the great mass of the people betrayed.[[6]](#footnote-6)

In this paper we complement this powerful analysis of the national picture with an in-depth exploration of approaches to the green belt in a specific context – the city of Liverpool and its surroundings. As we discuss in more detail, Liverpool’s case is interesting for a number of reasons. Principal amongst these is its maritime nature. Relocation of industry away from urban areas as recommended by, *inter alia*, the Barlow Commission, was less feasible for Liverpool than other cities such as Manchester – dockside industries could hardly be relocated inland – and the options for Liverpool’s urban growth were, and are, significantly reduced. The Mersey estuary to its west and south meant that if Liverpool needed to grow it must look to the north or the east, beyond its municipal boundaries, to the counties of Lancashire and Cheshire, which were resistant to such expansion.

These physical and administrative barriers to growth remain today, meaning that the tension between limiting urban sprawl and accommodating new homes likewise remains. This leads to vehement contemporary opposition to green belt deletion in the wider Liverpool City Region[[7]](#footnote-7) and the loss of parkland in the city.[[8]](#footnote-8) In what follows we analyse the historical evolution of the green belt around Liverpool, drawing on three key (sub-)regional plans. By exploring the discussions around the introduction of Liverpool’s green belt, and how those discussions were transferred into policy. In so doing we show how such contemporary opposition was effectively “baked in” to the governance of urban growth in Merseyside, leaving local authorities, Liverpool principle amongst them, with literally nowhere to go to accommodate increased housing demand. The result, the short-term embrace of high-rise ‘solutions’ between the 1950s and the 1980s, and the creation of a narrative of resentment to the external settlement of urban residents that continues to be voiced.

**Emerging tensions around World War II**

In 1945, ‘the great task of re-planning and physical reconstruction’ began, for ‘many towns [had] suffered grave damage from enemy attack, and great difficulties [had] been caused by large-scale movements of population and by economic and financial disturbance’.[[9]](#footnote-9) Housing was in critically short supply. Nationally, over 750,000 new homes were estimated to be needed ‘to afford a separate dwelling for every family desiring to have one’.[[10]](#footnote-10) Commenting on the challenges that would face a peace-time government, Liverpool’s Lord Woolton noted that:

When the war is over [Britons] will demand the rewards of heroism; they will expect to get them very soon and no power on earth will be able to rebuild the homes at the speed that will be necessary... there’s going to be grave trouble, and the danger is that if the machine of government which can spend money so recklessly in engaging in war, fails to be equally reckless in rebuilding, there will be both the tendency and the excuse for revolution.[[11]](#footnote-11)

Lord Addison, then Labour’s Leader in the House of Lords, concurred, asserting that

the great majority [of people]... want a house rather than a flat… they want them light, dry and warm… they want good washing facilities and cooking facilities… they want something much better than they have had hitherto… people want a shed.[[12]](#footnote-12)

Swept to victory in the 1945 General Election, Labour’s Aneurin Bevan, the new Minister of Health (then the department with responsibility for housing) promised to build ‘five million homes in quick time’.[[13]](#footnote-13) Subsequently reliant upon 1,700 individual local authorities to be the government’s building agents, Martin Daunton concludes ‘the volume of local authority housing was one of the most striking and peculiar features of British towns… only the socialist states of Eastern Europe could rival the level of public housing found in Glasgow or Birmingham’.[[14]](#footnote-14) Moreover, municipally-constructed housing was to be of a higher standard than that constructed in the interwar period.[[15]](#footnote-15) The Labour Government was determined not only to control the production of houses but also their allocation. To Britons, ‘the ideal of the home became a kind of grail, the only possible way to rediscover emotional and psychological security’ in the social confusion post-war.[[16]](#footnote-16) Security of domicile was a priority for the Labour Party for ideological reasons and political expediency; as Zweig wrote in 1948, ‘security is one of the basic differences between the working class and the middle class’.[[17]](#footnote-17) With reference to housing Britain’s urban dwellers, it followed that new homes would result in either, or both, the spatial footprint of towns being increased or the development of new satellite towns, for the overwhelming demand was not for inner-urban tenements (though these continued to be built), but for individual houses constructed in keeping with the low-density garden suburb ideal.

The practical need to construct replacement housing and the hitherto accepted policy doctrine that such housing would primarily take the form of lower-density suburban or peripheral estates was increasingly pitted against a political belief that urban sprawl must be contained, the countryside protected, and development within the perceived rural idylls that abutted Britain’s conurbations rigorously controlled. This was not a new phenomenon. Though Simmie suggests the idea of restricting peripheral development gathered pace from the late 1940s onwards,[[18]](#footnote-18) this paper advances that a broad-based political elite acceptance of the need for urban constraint was already well entrenched by the 1930s.

In his call for the formation of the Campaign for the Protection of Rural England (CPRE), Patrick Abercrombie proclaimed in May 1926 that while there was

no question of opposition to growth here [in the wild country]… whatever is added must be controlled stringently as to form and colour, together with the actual amount of the additions and their placing. A single bungalow roofed with pink artificial tiles, a factory chimney at a focal point or a glaring advertisement is able at a stroke to destroy the composed beauty of such a landscape.[[19]](#footnote-19)

Such sentiments gained immediate political endorsement across parties. In addition, therefore, to the CPRE’s inaugural meeting of December 1926 being addressed by the former Minister of Health, Neville Chamberlain, in October 1928 Ramsay McDonald, Leader of the Opposition, opined, in language most reminiscent of that deployed by Abercrombie, that

every day that goes past, some offensive bungalow, or some abomination of a building scheme, some horror of a wayside oil-pump station, or some blatant vulgarity of an advertisement, destroys not only the immediate spot where it is placed, but the whole sweep of the countryside... Something really must be done to stop it.[[20]](#footnote-20)

It was a language soon echoed in regional development report recommendations.

**Three regional plans**

Between the establishment of the CPRE and the series of government policy pronouncements of 1955 – discussed later herein – which required local planning authorities to prepare green belts for their areas, three “regional plans” were developed for greater Liverpool, which lay the foundations of Liverpool’s proto-green belt policies prior to 1955. However, each was independent of the others, none had statutory significance (though the third was part of a greater statutory process) and each defined the region differently. Given this, brief comment is made on their geographic scopes and purpose[s] before this paper offers a more detailed examination of each.

The first of the three plans was the South-West Lancashire Joint Town Planning Advisory Committee’s (SWLJTPAC) Report of 1930, *The Future Development of South-West Lancashire.* Established in January 1927 as an independent committee, the geographic scope of the SWLJTPAC’s deliberations enveloped 19 local government authorities (Figure One), with membership of the committee being drawn from each, as well as co-opted members from Lancashire County Council and four other bodies.[[21]](#footnote-21)

[Figure One about here].

Strictly advisory and with no statutory significance, the SWLJTPAC sought to ‘analyse the peculiar characteristics and individuality of the complex organism that is South-West Lancashire… [to] get a regional perspective and lose the merely local point of view’. [[22]](#footnote-22) Echoing elements of the comments previously made by the CPRE (amongst others), the committee believed that

without a regional plan land utilisation was chaotic. Buildings may occupy the sites of most important lines of communication; houses may be built on land pre-eminently suitable for industrial buildings; industrial buildings may be established in neighbourhood of a residential area to its great detriment; open places that are essential to the health and enjoyment of the population may be given over build use; and valuable agricultural land may be lost and the general amenity of the countryside be ruined by indiscriminate building along road frontages… Inconvenience, ugliness, and unhealthiness… [follow as] our towns sprawl and straggle over wide areas until they coalesce and suburbanise the whole countryside. [[23]](#footnote-23)

It followed that, in the absence of any form of regional-level authority with the power to co-ordinate the disparate and systemically antagonistic gallimaufry of individual local government authorities of different typologies that then existed, the SWLJTPAC’s Report could provide a pathway by which the region’s development might be mapped more holistically. Indeed, the committee opined that ‘development according to a preconceived plan for a whole regional area’ was the ‘only way’ through which ‘the best possible conditions of health, economy, convenience and amenity… for every inhabitant of the region… may be secured’.[[24]](#footnote-24)

In contrast to the relatively narrow spatial focus of the SWLJTPAC and its regionally-inspired inception, Longstreth Thompson’s *Merseyside Plan 1944* was centrally conceived, written at the behest of the Minister of Town and Country Planning. One of a number of regional plans commissioned for those areas that had suffered most from German, enemy, bombardment, it comprised approximately 450 square miles: from Chester in the south to Preston in the north, and from the River Dee estuary in the west to an eastern boundary ‘parallel with and about five miles westward of a line running through Warrington, Wigan, Chorley, and Preston’.[[25]](#footnote-25) In its totality, as Figure Two illustrates, it encompassed 24 individual local authorities (9 in Cheshire and 15 in Lancashire).[[26]](#footnote-26)

[Figure 2 about here]

As with the SWLJTPAC’s deliberations, the primary purpose of the *Merseyside Plan* was ‘to formulate a co-ordinated policy for the reconstruction and future re-development of the communities in Merseyside’ with its core objectives being to create the ‘best possible conditions for the inhabitants and the best possible working conditions for the port, industry and agriculture, upon which the prosperity and the livelihood of its inhabitants depend’.[[27]](#footnote-27) Given the region’s spatial vastness and the divergent needs of the plethora of local authorities therein, Thompson broke the region into five typographies; ‘Central Merseyside’ (his term for the Liverpool conurbation, encompassing the county boroughs of Liverpool, Bootle, Birkenhead, and Wallasey); ‘detached residential towns’ such as Southport and Hoylake; ‘detached industrial towns’ including St Helens, Widnes, and Runcorn; ‘country towns’ such as Ormskirk; and the ‘coalfield area’, from St Helen’s towards Widnes.

The third report was Sutton Brown’s *A Preliminary Plan for Lancashire.* Prepared for, and published by, Lancashire County Council (LCC) in 1951, it lay the foundations for the subsequent Statutory County Development Plan that LCC was obliged to construct under the 1947 Town and Country Planning Act. However, by being advisory, the *Preliminary Plan* ‘escape[d]’ as Hall *et al.,* note ‘the limitations of the administrative county boundaries… [and] consider[ed] the problems of county and county boroughs within a single framework’.[[28]](#footnote-28) Its aims mirrored those of the previous two plans. Thus, its objectives were:

1. to determine the scale and distribution of the imminent demands on land for housing and associated purposes;
2. to determine the scale and distribution of the available resources of land suitable for meeting this demand; and hence
3. to define the bounds within which urban development can be most advantageously confined.[[29]](#footnote-29)

Dividing Lancashire into 19 economic sub-regions, Sub-region 12, ‘South-west Lancashire’, enveloped the jurisdictions of 13 individual authorities (Figure 3),[[30]](#footnote-30) thus incorporating many of those addressed by the 1930 SWLJTPAC Report as well as those within the Lancashire-based portion of Thompson’s 1944 *Merseyside Plan*; the notable exceptions were St Helen’s, Widnes, and Skelmersdale.[[31]](#footnote-31)

[Figure 3 about here]

The SWLJTPAC’s 1930 Report, *The Future Development of South-West Lancashire,* stated a need to protect against the ‘evils’ of unchecked processes of development which had given rise to ‘ungoverned and untidy urbanisation’ and threatened to ‘suburbanise the whole countryside’.[[32]](#footnote-32) It contended that without rigorous control and designation of lands that could not be developed, there was a danger that the region would turn into an amorphous urban blob. The ‘artificialisation of the coastline’ on the region’s north-south axis, for instance, was viewed by the committee as leading to a situation whereby an 80-mile tranche of Lancashire’s coast from Widnes in the south to Southport in the north would be fringed by one concreted promenade, whilst the coalescence of urban settlements was already ‘complete in the east [around Liverpool]’, and with a little ribbon development, would form, from Liverpool to St Helens, ‘one long urban belt stretching the whole width of the region from east to west… some 13 or 14 unbroken miles of housing’.[[33]](#footnote-33) Adopting Unwin’s terminology of ‘green girdles’ as well as ‘natural reserves’ and ‘green wedges’, the SWLJTPAC concluded the only way to safeguard against this dystopian future was to ensure that future urban development was planned and zoned, and existing rural and open spaces protected and enhanced. Indeed, it prophesied the latter would become, for health and recreational purposes, as ‘important to the populations of our large towns as the road system’ was for trade and the economy.[[34]](#footnote-34) This safeguarding would be attained through two distinct policy strands.

First, future urban and industrial developments would be zoned through the limited expansion of existing settlements and the creation of ‘small satellite towns separated from the main urban area and form each other by a belt of permanently open country’.[[35]](#footnote-35) Echoing the principles of Howard’s garden city model (Figure 4), there would be eight such satellites: Speke, Hale, Halewood, Huyton-with-Roby, Knowsley, Kirkby, Maghull, and Hightown. As Figure 5 illustrates, such developments would comprise a central residential area, with interwoven green paths and open spaces linking residents to industrial and shopping areas; each development would be enveloped by designated, protected open areas ‘left largely in their natural state’.[[36]](#footnote-36)

[Figures 4,5 about here]

Beyond the new satellite settlements, controlled – and limited – expansion was envisaged for Southport and Formby, St Helens and Prescot, Widnes, Ormskirk, Burscough, Rainford, and Skelmersdale. In total, the SWLJTPAC recommended the future needs for all urban purposes (residential and industrial) required less than 40,000 additional acres, zoned ‘without any sacrifice of the principle of grouped satellite developments separated by large open areas of agricultural land’, and allowed a regional increase in population of 1,250,000 (unlikely to be reached before 2050).[[37]](#footnote-37)

Secondly, and dependent upon strand one being adopted, existing agricultural land should be designated as “natural reserve” land, gaining the status of “semi-public” land (a term the SWLJTPAC admitted was ‘not hitherto much used’). This would create ‘a type of open space… more or less unrecognised in town planning’.[[38]](#footnote-38) Notwithstanding such semantics, the SWLJTPAC hoped that through some form of undisclosed and seemingly undeveloped compensation mechanism, certain rights of limited public access might be granted to such land whilst ensuring that its owners retained their existing farming and/or sporting rights. Further, it was hoped similar forms of agreement might be reached with the region’s gentry whereby the urban public would gain agreed access to, for instance, the Knowsley and Scarisbrick estates, as well as with the owners of the region’s golf courses and foreshore.[[39]](#footnote-39) Such access rights would be dependent on the urban public demonstrating it knew how to conduct itself within a rural environment. Accordingly, until it could be proven access would not result in ‘trespass, destruction [and] mutilation’, the committee feared its semi-public land recommendations would not materialise.[[40]](#footnote-40) Such “othering” of urban dwellers was not unique to the deliberations of the SWLJTPAC. As John Sturzaker and Ian Mell discuss, it permeated a substantial tranche of 1930s planning thought.[[41]](#footnote-41) For example, Clough Williams-Ellis, famously the architect of Portmeirion, and the author and editor of two inter-war year tomes of anti-urban writing[[42]](#footnote-42) referenced ‘mean and perky little souls’ living in new countryside houses advocated birth control to limit urban populations and suggested those without the ‘instinct for country life’ should be prevented from leaving urban areas.[[43]](#footnote-43)

Cumulatively, SWLJTPAC’s proposals contained the expansionist tendencies of the region’s established urban centres, zoned future urban development, and created an integrated regional network of protected and accessible green spaces. That none of its proposals was acted upon – at least in the immediate term – was because there was no regional governance through which individual local government authorities could be obliged to work together to implement a single regional scheme.

SWLJTPAC’s proposals being of longer-term pertinence is, nonetheless, evidenced by their general thrust being was embraced within Thompson’s 1944 *Merseyside Plan –* with two notable differences. First, the *Merseyside Plan* scaled-down the region’s expected growth rate and the amount of urban zone development land needed to accommodate future residential and industrial needs. Secondly, Thompson rejected the need to develop new satellite towns in preference to controlled peripheral development and the development of ‘urban spurs’. The first chimed with mainstream planning thought; Abercrombie’s 1944 *Greater London Plan* assumed that the country’s and London’s population would fall.[[44]](#footnote-44) The second did not – beyond the ‘Green Zone’ (i.e. green belt) around London was to be the ‘Outer Country Ring’ which would largely be retained for agriculture but also ‘provide the sites for new satellites’.[[45]](#footnote-45)

Although Thompson argued that the historic peripheral expansion of Central Merseyside was such that it was not of a size where continued expansion within the built-up periphery was no longer tenable, he suggested that satellite towns should not be created in Merseyside for they were not, in his opinion, suited to the area’s ‘particular conditions and requirements’..[[46]](#footnote-46) These, he contended were three-fold. First, the number of suitable sites was ‘few and their use for building would entail the loss to agriculture of large areas of rich and productive land’.[[47]](#footnote-47) Secondly, the nature of central Merseyside’s primary industry (the docks and associated trades) meant that neither the present industries nor their employees could be relocated. Thirdly, whilst acknowledging that new industries would need to be introduced into the area – to create both greater industrial balance and enhanced job opportunities, he contended that as such industries new employees would be predominantly drawn from families ‘engaged in the [already] anchored industries’ and that consequently such new industries needed to be located in close proximity to them.[[48]](#footnote-48)

Given this, Thompson estimated that, for the Lancashire side of Central Merseyside with which this paper is concerned, the acreage needed for urban overspill resulting from the redevelopment of housing in older districts to newly approved standards and the extension of the inner-industrial and commercial zones was 6,085 acres, with approximately 1,915 additional acres needed to accommodate the increased number of individual family units – if not an increase in actual population.[[49]](#footnote-49) Moreover, he argued that the bulk of this required extra land could be obtained from within the ‘urban fence’, adopting the terminology used by Dudley Stamp, the vice-chair of the Scott committee, in his chapter within Abercrombie’s 1944 *Greater London Plan*.[[50]](#footnote-50) Thus, it would remain within the ‘boundaries of the already partially urbanised land on the outskirts of the conurbation’, at Halewood, Childwall, Fazakerley, and Litherland, with the rest being provided through the development of ‘four main spurs jut[ting] out from the perimeter [of the urban fence] at Speke, Huyton, Kirkby, and Maghull’, or the strictly limited expansion of existing communities at Formby, Prescot, and Rainhill.[[51]](#footnote-51)

Limited urban expansion in these specific areas was justified by Thompson on the basis that it would “tidy up and finish off” a series of developments begun pre-war, while simultaneously protecting the more important agricultural land that lay beyond. Thus, Thompson proposed an additional 680 acres should be included in Speke’s Urban Zone to enable completion of the Corporation’s Speke Estate; at Maghull an extra 710 ‘urban development’ acres would ‘consolidate the scattered blocks of inter-war development’.[[52]](#footnote-52) These proposed expansions were balanced by designating other land as protected “rural zones”. Thus, for instance, the farmland that abutted the Speke urban spur would be ‘strictly protected, not only in the agricultural interest, but also to preserve a belt of open country round Liverpool and to prevent the coalescence of Liverpool with Widnes’.[[53]](#footnote-53) Similar protected status was envisaged for rural farmland that abutted Huyton to the south, as well as the ‘Huyton Golf Course and adjoining parkland’ to the town’s east, to preserve open green spaces, limit the urban zone, and ‘prevent the coalescence of suburban Liverpool with Prescot’.[[54]](#footnote-54) Again, the similarities with Abercrombie’s *London Plan,* and indeed wider discussion of green belts, is striking.[[55]](#footnote-55)

Limiting urban expansion was not merely a physical consideration. Thompson also sought to preserve what he saw to be the distinct rural character of the country towns around Liverpool. Though he did not use the “othering” language hitherto noted, it is clear he saw a need for the maintenance of distinctive rural and urban spheres in keeping with the then structure of English local government. Thus, despite its being just 12 miles away from Liverpool with a good train service, Thompson suggested that it would be a ‘cardinal mistake to allow Ormskirk to develop into a dormitory suburb’ and that its future expansion should be ‘confined’ to that which was to be expected of a predominantly agricultural town.[[56]](#footnote-56) He also specifically rejected SWLJTPAC’s 1930 proposal that Burscough should be developed into a satellite town because of the aforementioned immovable nature of the region’s dominant industrial opportunities and that any such expansion would entail ‘the sacrifice of absolutely first-class agricultural land which… it is essential to preserve’.[[57]](#footnote-57) In contrast, with regard to Prescot and Rainhill, Thompson accepted both had become popular destinations for outmigration from both Central Merseyside and St Helens and accordingly recommended 600 additional acres should be designated for urban development. At the same time, however, and in order to ensure there was neither coalescence between Prescot’s urban zone and suburban Liverpool, nor between Prescot and St Helens, he proposed protected ‘permanent open space’ for Prescot’s northern, eastern and western sides.

In his appraisal of future urban development and expansion needs, Thompson advanced an agenda of keeping urban areas compact and their development limited. He suggested that, in assessing need, the planning question ought to be ‘not “Is this land suitable for building?”, but rather “Is this land required for building?”’.[[58]](#footnote-58) The *Merseyside Plan* also rejected applying the nationally-conceived policy of industrial and population decentralisation from the country’s major urban cities to Merseyside, contending its unique characteristics negated the model’s utility. Indeed, rather than promoting decentralisation, aspects of Thompson’s recommendations tacitly accepted that some established minor centres should be allowed to die through continued outmigration rather than being artificially supported through, for instance, socially-engineered forced relocation. Allied to this was Thompson’s aforementioned total rejection of satellite towns, a position for which he was applauded by Trystan Edwards (the founder of the Hundred New Towns Association). Edwards contented satellite towns represented ‘the least intelligent form of decentralisation… [did] nothing to correct the maldistribution of population… and clutter[ed] up the countryside in the neighbourhood of large cities where often the best agricultural land lies’, which was especially true of Merseyside’s estuarine agricultural importance.[[59]](#footnote-59) The region employed a substantially higher number of agricultural workers per 1,000 acres than areas such as Lincolnshire and Norfolk (generally characterised as more rural-economic in their focus) and, therefore, the conservation of its agricultural land was ‘in *no other* district… more essential than in Merseyside… one of [England’s] most fertile and intensively cultivated districts’.[[60]](#footnote-60) Finally, in grading the nature of rural land and that which should be protected, and proposing the development of both urban spurs and integrated green spaces within areas of urban zone development, Thompson’s *Merseyside Plan* sought to bring the benefits of the countryside to people, rather than depositing people therein and through so doing further depreciating this limited resource.

Thompson’s rejection of the satellite town concept for Merseyside was not, subsequently, shared at county-council level in Sutton Brown’s *A Preliminary Plan for Lancashire*. Whilst Merseyside, as noted, faced acute shortages of housing land and accessibility to non-urban green space, such problems were significantly amplified at county level. Lancashire had to contend not only with the expansionist demands of Liverpool and Manchester (though the latter’s future growth needs would be primarily channelled towards Cheshire) but also those of other county boroughs within its territories; of the five million living within its geographical area, some two million lived within the boundaries of 17 county boundaries.

Containing and confining the expansionist desires of its county boroughs’ local government authorities was, therefore, critically important to Lancashire County Council (LCC) for, as Cullingworth notes, if Manchester, Liverpool and the other urban centres were each successful in their various boundary extension proposals, LCC would lose, respectively, 53, 64, and 65 per cent of its land, population and rateable values, becoming

a small, formless, and predominantly rural area shorn of the major part of its existing wealth and powers. Quite apart from the natural reluctance of the County to agree (in its own words) to ‘annihilation’, it argued that the need of land for housing alone was not a good reason for [county borough] boundary extensions.[[61]](#footnote-61)

This county-level resistance to the desired expansion of county boroughs was nothing new; it had been consistently applied by LCC against all expansion requests by Liverpool City Corporation since 1888. However, the arguments now deployed by LCC to control urban sprawl took place in a very different geo-political context. Surveying the future development needs of the county on the basis of industrial and residential development (including rehousing from slum clearance schemes), as well as open green spaces, LCC’s *Preliminary Plan* concluded the county’s pre-existent (1948) housing stock needed to be increased by 47 per cent by 1962 to meet new demand. This was comprised of three distinct elements: 64 per cent to replace unsanitary property, 19 per cent to eradicate multi-family occupancy, and 17 per cent to address population increases.[[62]](#footnote-62)

At county-level, this overspill would be predominantly accommodated through developing three new towns (Parbold, Leyland, and Garstang), the controlled enlargement of existing small towns, and suburban extensions. Of Merseyside’s/Sub-region 12’s total estimated overspill of 185,000 it was envisaged 25,400 persons would be accommodated through peripheral expansions in the north and south east.[[63]](#footnote-63) Additionally, 68,600 would be accommodated through ‘building up’ the townships of Crosby, Aintree, Maghull, and Kirkby to be ‘virtually self-contained units (except for industry)’, with each separated from Liverpool by ‘wedges of open countryside’.[[64]](#footnote-64) Further, urban expansion would be strictly limited to that ‘necessary to maintain the housing programmes of the overspilling authorities until alternative long-distance reception areas... beyond the fertile agricultural plain…[could] be prepared’.[[65]](#footnote-65) The longer-term solution (estimated to take 28 years to complete), was that 51 per cent of Merseyside’s overspill population – some 91,000 people – would be housed outside the sub-region, predominantly within Parbold New Town, 19 miles north-east of Liverpool, and Garstang New Town (near Lancaster), a distance of approximately 50miles.[[66]](#footnote-66) The feasibility of such a socially-engineered relocation to the latter, along with the industries needed to support such a population, would be, the *Preliminary Plan* noted, ‘no easy matter’.[[67]](#footnote-67)

This policy outline was supplemented within the *Preliminary Plan* by a series of proposals in which LCC claimed, with regard to south-west Lancashire, to ‘accept, with certain modifications, the broad principles set out in Thompson[’s] *Merseyside Plan*’.[[68]](#footnote-68) Beyond the fact that Thompson had wholly rejected the principle of satellite towns, there is validity in aspects of this claim; like the *Merseyside Plan*, the *Preliminary Plan* noted that any peripheral extension to the conurbation must not occur at the expense of first-class agricultural land and agreed expansion should be restricted to ‘a rounding-off of existing build up areas’ – in essence an endorsement of Stamp’s argument urban developments should be curtailed within the existing ‘urban fence’.

**The 1950s – inception of the formal green belt**

It was against this local and regional context of over 25 years of discussion on curtailing Liverpool’s expansion and the need for some form of protected countryside, as well the ministry’s own findings that, nationally, county boroughs sought to expand by upwards of 25 per cent to accommodate more housing, that Duncan Sandys, as Minister for Housing and Local Government, introduced the first national planning policy that encouraged all local authorities to introduce green belts. Explaining his rationale to the House of Commons Sandys stated that, at the national level, government needed ‘to do all we can to prevent the further unrestricted sprawl of the great cities’ by ensuring that, at the local level, planning authorities ‘restrict further building development around the large urban areas… [by] submitting to me proposals for the creation of clearly defined green belts, wherever this is appropriate’.[[69]](#footnote-69) The subsequent circular (42/55) of August 1955 instructed planning authorities beyond London to consider establishing clearly defined green belts in order to:

1. check the future growth of large, built-up areas;
2. prevent neighbouring towns from merging; and
3. preserve the special character of a town.[[70]](#footnote-70)

Lund suggests this policy was explicitly designed to reinforce the Conservatives’ shire vote, for it protected rural interests from the threat of further incursions from an ‘undesirable’, inner-urban working class.[[71]](#footnote-71) Though this may well have been a factor, it was also the case that the genesis of each of these aims had, as this paper has shown, a far longer pedigree, to a period well before issues of increased voter-dealignment came to the fore party-politically. Moreover, the green belt concept appears to have garnered immediate support from all sectors of the public. For instance, B.J. Collins, Middlesex’s County Planning Officer, noted ‘[it] sounds like something an ordinary man may find worthwhile…[it] has a natural facility for engendering support’.[[72]](#footnote-72) Hertfordshire’s County Planner, Ernest Doubleday, concurred, claiming ‘no planning circular … has ever been so popular with the public. The idea has caught on and is supported by people of all [political] shades’.[[73]](#footnote-73)

Sandy’s parliamentary announcement and Circular 42/55 required local authorities wishing to establish green belts to discuss their proposals with neighbouring authorities and the MHLG before submitting a ‘sketch plan’ containing an outline of the scheme’s boundaries. Further clarification as to the reasoning that authorities should advance to the Ministry was subsequently circulated in Circular 50/57. It advised that the inner (town-facing) boundary of the of the green belt sketches of the petitioning authority should mark the ‘long-term boundary for [the given authority’s] development’ and that plans should also include areas of ‘white land’; ‘pockets of land, between the town and the green belt, which are not to be developed within the present… but which could be developed later without prejudice to the Green Belt’.[[74]](#footnote-74) The inclusion of this ‘white land’ would guarantee, the Ministry opined, the long-term “sanctity” of any land designated as green belt and mitigate against a scenario developing in which land so designated was subsequently re-categorised as land for development. Moreover, though such areas might eventually ‘be allocated to meet demands for development’, they would, in the meantime, be treated as effective green belt; authorities could ‘permit only such development there as would be appropriate in the neighbouring Green Belt’.[[75]](#footnote-75)

Seemingly swamped by the number of green belt applications it received, the MHLG’s *Report of the Year 1956* can be interpreted as urging more restraint upon authorities considering submitting green belt applications. It noted, for instance, that green belts could only be ‘justified where the position urgently demands it…[S]election and definition should be carried out to avoid possible amendments to what are thought to be permanent features of a development plan’.[[76]](#footnote-76) Their permanence along with the trade-off between the creation of green belt areas and the need for higher density development within ‘green belt constrained’ authorities and extra-mural sites beyond was made even more explicit in ministerial comments and department circulars four years later. Circular 37/60 noted, for instance, that ‘a green belt is a long-term restriction of development in a defined area… it must be matched by adequate provision for balanced and compact development elsewhere’,[[77]](#footnote-77) while Henry Brooke (Sandy’s successor as Minister of Housing and Local Government) asserted in a written answer to the House of Commons that ‘green belts, once properly established, should…be maintained inviolate’.[[78]](#footnote-78)

Lancashire and Cheshire County Councils submitted draft ‘sketch plans’ for green belts in Merseyside and the Wirral in 1960 and 1961, respectively. Progress with approval was slow. By 1962, seven years after the publication of Circular 42/55, only London’s green belt had been ‘firmly and permanently defined’.[[79]](#footnote-79) As the MP for the Wells, Lieutenant Commander Stephen Maydon, further lamented in the House of Commons ‘it all takes too long… [we] urge the government to streamline the procedure. The principles are quite right, but the processes are far too slow’.[[80]](#footnote-80) With ministerial decisions on the proposals submitted by Lancashire and Cheshire deferred in 1962, and the subsequent election of Harold Wilson’s first government in 1964, the two counties’ green belt proposals – as with others nationwide – entered a sustained period of abeyance. As Martin Elson surmises, ‘by the end of 1962 around 14,600 square kilometres of the country were subject to green belt policies… [but many of these] were to be operated for a quarter of a century on what was effectively an interim basis’.[[81]](#footnote-81)

Despite the hiatus in decision-making, the 1960s were far from being a period of regional inaction. A plethora of regionally-focused initiatives was centrally established such as Regional Economic Planning Councils, and the long overdue process of reforming the late nineteenth-century structure of English local government gathered apace. Though such reform processes were not directly linked to the green belt, they impacted upon it. Established in 1966 with significantly greater powers to recast English local government than the commissions that had proceeded it,[[82]](#footnote-82) the Royal Commission on Local Government in England, chaired by Sir John Maud (Redcliffe-Maud), reported in 1969. Its report, along with Derek Senior’s simultaneously published *Memorandum of Dissent*, recommended substantial changes for Merseyside. Though neither sets of proposals were enacted – as a consequence of the surprise return to power of the Conservatives in the 1970 General Election – change would still be forthcoming, for the incoming government had promised to reform local government within the lifetime of the next parliament.[[83]](#footnote-83)

However, whereas both Redcliffe-Maud’s and Senior’s proposals were urban-oriented and would have led to a transference of local political power to urban elites at the expense of the traditional county-based system of ‘regional’ local government, the Local Government Act 1972[[84]](#footnote-84) ‘largely maintained the power of the shire Counties [though they were reformed]… and the green belts that they had promoted’,[[85]](#footnote-85) with the boundaries of urban-based authorities being, in the main, tightly drawn. Within the study area, the 1972 Act established, from 1 April 1974 onwards, the Metropolitan County of Merseyside as the top-tier authority for the area, supplemented by five metropolitan boroughs; Knowsley, Liverpool, Sefton, St Helens within Lancashire, and Wirral within Cheshire. Nationwide, only two second-tier metropolitan districts had boundaries unchanged from those of their predecessor authorities: Wolverhampton and Liverpool.

Concurrent to these changes was the work of the North West Joint Planning Team (NWJPT). Commissioned, in 1971, to develop a *Strategic Plan for the North West* by the Government, the region’s local planning authorities, and the North West Economic Planning Council,[[86]](#footnote-86) it sought to ‘provide a regional planning framework for a wide range of government decisions and policy-making on issues affecting the North West’.[[87]](#footnote-87) Its findings underlined the scale of the problems the region faced; as H.B. Rodgers surmised in his review of the commission’s work:

The North West of England is a miserable region in which to have to live. The Strategic Plan for the North West study team collected and compared 26 regional indices of the quality of life and of the environment: on 8 of these measures the North West is the worst of all the regions of Great Britain and on another 5 it is so close to the worst that the difference is insignificant. This is Britain's most polluted region… Life is nasty, brutal and short… Despite its long coastline and its hinterland of fells, the region has almost the smallest provision of all for outdoor recreation.[[88]](#footnote-88)

Given the evident need to improve the quality of the urban lived environment, the NWJPT saw ‘the retention and strengthening of green belts [i.e. those areas covered by the submitted draft plans but not agreed since 1960/61 onwards] as an essential part of both open land policy and urban infrastructure’, and believed it should perform three key functions:

1. to assist the strategic and structure planning of the region by defining those areas which should be kept free of urban development, and in so doing guiding development to such areas as conform to the plan;
2. to assist in providing an identity for individual townships by helping to preserve the lattice of open space between them, and to help in conserving the special character of towns; and
3. to provide positively for the uses of open land, including the retention of viable agricultural holdings development of recreational facilities and improvement of despoiled and under-used areas.[[89]](#footnote-89)

Fleshing out these ideals, the report proposed, with particular reference to the metropolitan country areas of the North West region (i.e. Merseyside and Manchester), that green belts should be ‘promoted on tracts of open land near [the] large towns... [and] extend along river valleys, and other wedges of open land as part of the provision of urban open space’.[[90]](#footnote-90) In contrast, within the region’s non-metropolitan areas (Cheshire, mid and north Lancashire, and Derbyshire’s High Peak area) green belt would be ‘large in area, continuous in character and positive in provision for the encouragement of open uses in general and recreation in particular’.[[91]](#footnote-91)

Accordingly, the NWJPT recommended that all of those areas presently operating under green belt provisions (i.e. those areas where proposals had been submitted but permanent status had not been decided by the ministry, and which were also contained within its own proposals for the green belt; Figure 6) should either be approved by the ministry as soon as possible or continue to operate under green belt provisions until the strategic plans for the area were implemented through the structure and local plans then being prepared.[[92]](#footnote-92) The *Strategic Plan* thus recommended, as Figure 6 makes clear, that within the newly established Metropolitan County of Merseyside, the Metropolitan Borough of Liverpool would possess no green belt to speak of, although land in Knowsley, Sefton (but not St Helens) would be so designated.

[Figure 6 about here]

At the same time, it was recommended that areas of land the *Strategic Plan* simply designated as ‘countryside’ should be inspected further to determine whether it was best suited to growth, green belt, or other positive open land policy. These were areas of land which, the *Strategic Plan* admitted, were likely to give rise to conflict as a consequence of the competing demands of protecting open countryside (whether or not it was green belt) and the need to relieve, especially, existent pressures of housing, particularly amongst the ‘lower income groups in the inner areas of Liverpool’.[[93]](#footnote-93) To this end, therefore, and mindful that such a policy would be at the expense of agricultural land, the *Strategic Plan* also recommended that limited ‘corridor developments’ should be permitted. These were primarily a reworking of the urban spur model mooted by Thompson in the Merseyside Plan 1944, with the *Strategic Plan* advancing that such a corridor should be developed between Liverpool, Huyton, and Prescot. It would not, however, be ‘a solid continuation of urban development’ but ‘a local concentration of distinct social communities’.[[94]](#footnote-94)

In keeping with the statutory requirement to develop a Structure Plan, Merseyside County Council published the *Merseyside Structure Plan: Written Statement* (*MSPWS*) in December 1979. It advocated establishing a green belt in line with the suggestions made in the *Strategic Plan*; one upon the Wirral and the other ‘to the east of the River Mersey, around the principal settlements and including green wedges into the conurbation’.[[95]](#footnote-95) The general boundaries of that green belt land were provided within an accompanying map (Figure 7) with precise boundaries being thereafter determined in a more detailed Subject Plan.

[Figure 7 about here]

The *MSPWS* stated Merseyside’s green belt would perform three functions:

* + check the outward spread of the built-up area, direct development into existing towns, and encourage their regeneration;
  + ensure that towns and villages keep their individual character; and
  + safeguard the surrounding countryside, so that its potential for agriculture, nature conservation and recreation and its value as an amenity for townspeople is preserved.[[96]](#footnote-96)

The lineage of each to the various proposals advanced from the 1920s onwards is evident, whilst the inclusion of a new green belt function – as an aid to inner-urban regeneration – echoed the region’s changed socio-economic realities.

Eleven months later, in November 1980, the *Merseyside Structure Plan* was approved by the then Secretary of State, Michael Heseltine. In the same month, MCC published its draft *Green Belt Subject Plan*. Amended in the light of 452 comments and representations, revised proposals were deposited between December 1981 and February 1982. These revised proposals, in turn, attracted some 560 comments and led to MCC, in June 1982, making a series of minor amendments to the areas designated green belt within the districts of Sefton, Knowsley and St Helens.[[97]](#footnote-97) Finally, this “third set” of proposals gave rise to a further 90 representations and objections upon which a public inquiry was held between September and November 1982.[[98]](#footnote-98) Principal amongst the objections were that the green belt boundary had been drawn too tightly around urban areas; there was inadequate land for development outside the proposed green belt area, and, with regard to both, insufficient attention had been given to the needs of the area beyond 1986 (the year of the notional end-date of the 1980 *Merseyside Structure Plan*).[[99]](#footnote-99)

Rejecting the call for the green belt boundary around the urban areas to be loosened, the Inspector drew attention to the ‘very high proportion of built-up area as against open countryside in Merseyside’ and concluded that a more generous allowance would ‘have been an invitation in the longer term to further erode the already scarce open areas’,[[100]](#footnote-100) and that the proposals put forward by MCC assisted in the achievement of the three green belt functions as outlined in the *Merseyside Structure Plan*. Indeed, the Inspector decided he could not recommend major changes to the proposed green belt boundary (though some small site adjustments were made) and that the general boundary should remain as it had been drafted.[[101]](#footnote-101) At the same time, the Inspector’s Report also acknowledged that, in the future, revision was likely to be necessary for the green belt as drafted gave ‘very little space for flexibility or manoeuvre’ and thus it was unlikely that all of the future requirements of the housing market would be met.[[102]](#footnote-102) The proposals were subsequently formalised in the 1983 *Merseyside Green Belt Local Plan: Written Statement* and accompanying map.[[103]](#footnote-103) By 1986, just three years later, however, the 1980 *Merseyside Structure Plan* was redundant, and the authority that had written it abolished. As a result, the Inspector’s envisaged review of Merseyside’s green belt was not carried out and the particularly tight boundary around the city of Liverpool remained. This had major implications for the residents of the city, as we discuss in the following, concluding, section.

**(Ongoing) implications for housing provision**

The practical reality of effectively five decades of the urban-containment of Liverpool from a housing perspective was that the rehousing needs of Liverpool’s inner-urban residents had to be met either through their forced relocation to sites beyond the “envisaged/sketched” green belt in, for instance, the new towns (under construction), or by the provision of new housing *in situ*. Liverpool faced a herculean task. As Liverpool’s Medical Officer declared in 1955 – the same year as Sandys’ green belt policy had been unveiled – there were 88,000 homes unfit for habitation within the city; approximately 45 per cent of its total housing stock. Unable to expand outwards – given the green belt policies enacted, the preferred political “solution” to this dilemma was the embrace of high-rise living; a policy much vaunted by nationally-based politicians and policy experts.

In 1956, for instance, the MP Anthony Crosland wrote, in *The Future of Socialism*, that he would be prepared to ‘pay any subsidy necessary to encourage more high building in cities in the interests of preserving the countryside’,[[104]](#footnote-104) whilst two years later, his former Oxford tutee and now MP, Tony Benn proclaimed, visiting newly constructed flats in his Bristol constituency, that

to see the bright airy rooms with the superb view and to contrast them with the poky slum dwellings of Barton Hill below was to get all the reward one wants from politics. For this grand conception of planning is what it is all about.[[105]](#footnote-105)

Viewed through such a prism, the greater embrace of high-rise living from the late 1950s was an essential part of the policy solution to the question of where to (better) house those displaced through the regeneration and demolition of slums, which simultaneously safeguarded the green belt. It was also, however, a policy that contained distinctive party political electoral considerations for concentrating urban working-class voters within dense tower blocks not only protected the Tory shires by minimising urban excursions into the green belt but was also a means by which to “herd” the urban poor into densely compacted electoral wards that became increasingly Labour-dominated. This was a process which, with reference to Liverpool, gathered pace from 1955 onwards when the city first returned a Labour council.

High-rise promised that former slum-dwellers could achieve a better life without permanent relocation beyond the historic ‘urban fence’:

[S]hared facilities and better accommodation would civilise the individual whilst nourishing a sense of community… domestic life would escape the noise and dangers of the street; health and amenity would gain, and accidents would decline through separating people from traffic, work from residence… [and] overcrowded Victorian slums would give way to light and airy apartments set within democratised equivalents of the eighteenth-century aristocratic park.[[106]](#footnote-106)

This was not necessarily however, the reaction of those thus accommodated. The MHLG’s 1970 report *Families Living at High Density: A Study of Estates in Leeds, Liverpool and London* recorded, for instance, with especial reference to Liverpool’s Everton Heights (constructed between 1955 and 1963 at a density of 140 persons per acre), that most surveyed housewives perceived the estate to be a ‘dirty, poor environment… [with] debris-covered cleared sites… and blocks too close together’.[[107]](#footnote-107) Moreover, and contradicting Benn’s idealised vision of ‘superb views’, some 62% of residents disliked the views from their kitchens, with a majority complaining that they had ‘nothing to see’ and were ‘hemmed in’.[[108]](#footnote-108) As Brian Harrison concludes, while their construction may have reduced urban sprawl, high-rise estates did not give people what they wanted; ‘children had nowhere to play... neighbourliness withered, [and the] convenience of garden and backyard [was] swapped for the privacy of loneliness and isolation’.[[109]](#footnote-109) Indeed, over a quarter of Everton Rise’s inhabitants expressed a desire to live elsewhere with over 71% wanting to live in a standard house rather than a flat. This level of dissatisfaction predominantly stemmed from problems that were high-rise specific: inadequate balcony-based laundry drying facilities, (see Figure 8), an inability to clean the outside of windows, refuse chute failures leading to vermin infestations, and the repeated use of lifts as lavatories.[[110]](#footnote-110)

[Figure 8 about here]

In Liverpool, as elsewhere, loss of community identity and belonging had substantial negative civil effects, with rising crime and anti-social behaviour linked to high-rise blocks giving rise from the mid-1970s onwards to a new generation of “othering” of inner urban residents.[[111]](#footnote-111) The model whereby the green belt could be preserved through higher urban density without a loss of amenity was clearly flawed, but the voice of those thus affected were not as readily heard as others; as Elmer Schnattschneider wryly noted ‘in the *pluralist* heaven… the heavenly *chorus* sings with an upper-class accent’.[[112]](#footnote-112)

Meanwhile, those who could (and can) afford to exercise more choice in where they live, specifically in terms of owner-occupation, voted with their feet and deserted the central and inner city parts of Liverpool – as in most other UK cities. The constraints put in place by the green belt have, therefore, led not only significant “leap-frogging” to areas beyond the city boundaries and densification of areas within them but also the continued “othering” of urban-focused residents by those who reside beyond the historic ‘urban fence’, with ongoing opposition to the attempts of Merseyside local authorities to accommodate demands for suburban-style living on open space and green belt. At the time of writing, Liverpool City Council has just lost a judicial review to build upon land adjacent to one of its parks,[[113]](#footnote-113) Wirral Council has completed an intensely controversial review of its green belt to accommodate significant new housing numbers,[[114]](#footnote-114) and residents of the village of Hale have referred to an attempt by Halton Borough Council to adjust ward boundaries and ‘"lump" it with the neighbouring area of Ditton, [Widnes](https://www.liverpoolecho.co.uk/all-about/widnes), as "an act of vandalism"’[[115]](#footnote-115). The latter controversy is not directly related to housebuilding or the green belt, but reflects the anti-urban rhetoric discussed above.

We opened this paper with a quote from Peter Hall *et al.* that decried the ‘Containment of Urban England’. Our contribution has been to illustrate how this containment played out in practice in and around Liverpool. We have illustrated how Liverpool was contained through a tight green belt while decentralisation to surrounding areas was limited. The aim of this approach was to encourage greater densification and revitalisation of the urban core, something which remains understood by many as more sustainable in today’s language. However, this approach takes little account of residential preferences, which research continues to indicate are, in many cases, for suburban and rural living.[[116]](#footnote-116) This “bakes in” an oppositional model of planning which, at best, perpetuates a situation where preferences for homes in lower-density are available only to the wealthy, whilst the less well-off continue to be excluded.

1. Unwin, *Town Planning in Practice;* Pepler*,* “Greater London”*.*  [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Hare, *“Green Belt”*; Miller, *“The Elusive Green Background”.* [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Sandys, ‘Ministerial Comments’ *Hansard,* H.C. Debs, Vol. 540, col. 45; 26 April 1955; Mandelker, *Green Belts and Urban Growth.* [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Elson, *Green Belts: Conflict Mediation*; Sturzaker and Mell, *Green Belts* [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Barlow, *Report Industrial Population;* Uthwatt*, Report Compensation and Betterment;* Reith*, Report New Towns Committee.*  [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Hall *et al*., *Containment of Urban England,* Vol. II, 433. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. *St Helen’s Reporter*, “Changes Afoot to Controversial Green Belt Plans,” 5 April 2017. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. *Liverpool Echo*, “35,000 People Now Oppose Controversial Calderstones Park Development,” 24 September 2019 [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. Ministry of Health, *Local Government,* 3. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. Ministry of Reconstruction*, Housing,* 2. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. Woolton, *Diary*, 1 November 1940, cited Hennessey, *Never Again,* 163. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. *Hansard,* H.L. Debs, Vol. 130, col. 693; 8 February 1944. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. Bevan cited Addison, *Now the War is Over,* 57. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. Daunton, *Cambridge Urban History,* 36. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. Holmes, *Housing, Equality and Choice,* 3. [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. Beach and Tiratsoo, “Planners” 546. [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. Zweig, *Labour, Life and Poverty,* 59. [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. Simmie, *Planning Crossroads*, 180. [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. Abercrombie, “Preservation of Rural England,” 16. [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. *Carp Review,* “To Save Beauty of British Landscape.” [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
21. SWLJTPAC, *Future Development,* vii-viii.

    The constituent authorities comprised the County Boroughs of Liverpool, Bootle, Southport, and St Helen’s; the Municipal Borough of Widnes, the Urban Districts of Formby, Great Crosby, Huyton-with-Roby, Lathom and Burscough, Litherland, Little Crosby, Ormskirk, Prescott, Rainford, Skelmersdale, and Waterloo-with-Seaforth; and the Rural Districts of Sefton, West Lancashire, and Whiston. The co-opted members comprised Lancashire County Council, the Liverpool and District Regional Survey Association (represented by Patrick Abercrombie and Percy Roxby), the Road Improvement Association (North-Western branch), the Great Crosby Joint Town Planning Committee, and the Land Agents Society. [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
22. SWLJTPAC, *Future Development,* 1. [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
23. *Ibid.,* 2. [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
24. *Ibid.,* 2-3. [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
25. Edwards, “Book Review,” 102. [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
26. Within Lancashire; the City of Liverpool, the County Boroughs of Bootle, St Helens, and Southport, the Municipal Boroughs of Crosby, and Widnes, the Urban Districts of Formby, Huyton-with Roby, Litherland, Ormskirk, Prescot, Rainford, and Skelmersdale, and the Rural Districts of West Lancashire, and Whiston. From Cheshire; the County Boroughs of Birkenhead, and Wallasey, Bebington Municipal borough, the Urban Districts of Ellesmere Port, Hoylake, Neston, Runcorn, and Wirral, and Runcorn Rural District. [↑](#footnote-ref-26)
27. Thompson, *Merseyside Plan*, 1. [↑](#footnote-ref-27)
28. Hall *et al.*, *Containment of Urban England*, Vol. I, 581. [↑](#footnote-ref-28)
29. LCC, *Preliminary Plan,* 3. [↑](#footnote-ref-29)
30. Economic Sub-region (ESR) 12 comprised the County Boroughs of Liverpool, Bootle, and Southport; Crosby Municipal Borough; the Urban Districts of Formby, Huyton-with-Roby, Litherland, Ormskirk, Prescot, and Rainford; and the Rural Districts of West Lancashire, Whiston, and Wigan (for clarity, Wigan County Borough was a separate entity within ESR 13). [↑](#footnote-ref-30)
31. These were respectively covered by ESR 13: ‘South Lancashire’ (St Helens and Skelmersdale), and ESR 17: Warrington (Widnes). [↑](#footnote-ref-31)
32. SWLJTPAC, *Future Development*, 46, 47. [↑](#footnote-ref-32)
33. *Ibid.,* 10-13. [↑](#footnote-ref-33)
34. *Ibid.,* 98. [↑](#footnote-ref-34)
35. *Ibid.,* 57. [↑](#footnote-ref-35)
36. *Ibid.,* 63. [↑](#footnote-ref-36)
37. *Ibid.,* 56. [↑](#footnote-ref-37)
38. *Ibid.,* 106. [↑](#footnote-ref-38)
39. *Ibid.,* 101-101, 106-107. [↑](#footnote-ref-39)
40. *Ibid.,* 107. [↑](#footnote-ref-40)
41. Sturzaker and Mell, *Green Belts,* 22. [↑](#footnote-ref-41)
42. Williams-Ellis, *England and the Octopus; Britain and the Beast.*  [↑](#footnote-ref-42)
43. Williams-Ellis, *England and the Octopus,* 15, 42, 38. [↑](#footnote-ref-43)
44. Abercrombie, *Greater London Plan*, 5. [↑](#footnote-ref-44)
45. *Ibid.,* 8. [↑](#footnote-ref-45)
46. Thompson, *Merseyside Plan,* 4. [↑](#footnote-ref-46)
47. *Ibid.* [↑](#footnote-ref-47)
48. *Ibid.,* 5. [↑](#footnote-ref-48)
49. *Ibid.,* 13, 18. [↑](#footnote-ref-49)
50. See, Sturzaker and Mell, *Green Belts*, 27. [↑](#footnote-ref-50)
51. Thompson, *Merseyside Plan,* 80. [↑](#footnote-ref-51)
52. *Ibid.,* 18. [↑](#footnote-ref-52)
53. *Ibid*. [↑](#footnote-ref-53)
54. *Ibid.,* 19. [↑](#footnote-ref-54)
55. Sturzaker and Mell, *Green Belts,* Chapter Two. [↑](#footnote-ref-55)
56. Thompson, *Merseyside Plan,* 33. [↑](#footnote-ref-56)
57. *Ibid.,* 33-34. [↑](#footnote-ref-57)
58. *Ibid.,* 3. [↑](#footnote-ref-58)
59. Edwards, “Book Review,” 104. [↑](#footnote-ref-59)
60. Thompson, *Merseyside Plan,* 35, 34. [↑](#footnote-ref-60)
61. Cullingworth, *Housing Needs*, 147-148. [↑](#footnote-ref-61)
62. LCC, *Preliminary Plan,* Tables 29-36. [↑](#footnote-ref-62)
63. *Ibid.,* 39. [↑](#footnote-ref-63)
64. *Ibid.* [↑](#footnote-ref-64)
65. *Ibid.,* 40. [↑](#footnote-ref-65)
66. *Ibid.,* 44, 42. The third new town, Leyland (five miles from Preston) would accommodate overspill only from Preston, Wigan, and Manchester. [↑](#footnote-ref-66)
67. *Ibid.,* 135. [↑](#footnote-ref-67)
68. *Ibid.,* 134. [↑](#footnote-ref-68)
69. *Hansard,* H.C. Debs, Vol. 540, col. 45; 26 April 1955. [↑](#footnote-ref-69)
70. MHLG, *Circular 42/55*. [↑](#footnote-ref-70)
71. Lund, *Housing Politics*, 48. [↑](#footnote-ref-71)
72. Collins, “A Talk on Green Belts,” 221-222. [↑](#footnote-ref-72)
73. Doubleday, “Green Belts – Effective Control,”197. [↑](#footnote-ref-73)
74. MHLG, *Circular 50/57*, para 6. [↑](#footnote-ref-74)
75. *Ibid.,* Appendix, para c. [↑](#footnote-ref-75)
76. MHLG, *Year Report 1956*, 43. [↑](#footnote-ref-76)
77. MHLG, *Circular, 37/60*, para. 8. [↑](#footnote-ref-77)
78. *Hansard*, H.C. Debs, Vol. 626, col. 22-3W; 5 July 1960. [↑](#footnote-ref-78)
79. *Ibid.,* Vol. 654, col. 484; 21 February 1962. [↑](#footnote-ref-79)
80. *Ibid.* [↑](#footnote-ref-80)
81. Elson, *Green Belts: Conflict Mediation*, 23. [↑](#footnote-ref-81)
82. The Onslow Commission of the 1920s and the Hancock Local Government Commission 1958-1967. [↑](#footnote-ref-82)
83. Young, “The Party,” 429. [↑](#footnote-ref-83)
84. Local Government Act 1972 (Elizabeth II c. 70). [↑](#footnote-ref-84)
85. Elson, *Green Belts: Conflict Mediation*, 40. [↑](#footnote-ref-85)
86. NWJPT, *Strategic Plan*, Frontispiece. [↑](#footnote-ref-86)
87. *Ibid.* [↑](#footnote-ref-87)
88. Rodgers, “Review of NWJPT Strategic Plan,” 97. [↑](#footnote-ref-88)
89. NWJPT, *Strategic Plan*, 208*.* [↑](#footnote-ref-89)
90. *Ibid.,* 209 [↑](#footnote-ref-90)
91. *Ibid.* [↑](#footnote-ref-91)
92. *Ibid.,* 208; Cullingworth, *British Planning*, 50-56, gives a succinct overview. [↑](#footnote-ref-92)
93. NWJPT, *Strategic Plan,* 240. [↑](#footnote-ref-93)
94. *Ibid.,* 241. [↑](#footnote-ref-94)
95. MCC, *Merseyside Structure Plan*, 96. [↑](#footnote-ref-95)
96. *Ibid.* [↑](#footnote-ref-96)
97. MCC, *Report of the Inspector*, paras 1.1 and 1.7 [↑](#footnote-ref-97)
98. *Ibid.,* para. 1. [↑](#footnote-ref-98)
99. *Ibid.*, paras 1.4-1.44 [↑](#footnote-ref-99)
100. *Ibid.,* para. 1.30. [↑](#footnote-ref-100)
101. *Ibid.,* para. 1.34. [↑](#footnote-ref-101)
102. *Ibid.,* para. 1.31. [↑](#footnote-ref-102)
103. Together, the written statement and map gave a ‘general illustration of the overall extent of the Green Belt’ and would be ‘used by the local planning authorities as a guide to preparing Local Plans’, MCC, *Green Belt, Written Statement*, paras 1.1, 1.5. [↑](#footnote-ref-103)
104. Crossland, *Future Socialism,* 526. [↑](#footnote-ref-104)
105. Benn, *Diaries 1940-1962,* 289*.* [↑](#footnote-ref-105)
106. Harrison, *Seeking a Role*, 151. [↑](#footnote-ref-106)
107. MHLG, *Living at High Density*, 20. [↑](#footnote-ref-107)
108. *Ibid.,* 31. [↑](#footnote-ref-108)
109. Harrison, *Seeking a Role*, 151. [↑](#footnote-ref-109)
110. MHLG, *Living at High Density,* 37-41. [↑](#footnote-ref-110)
111. See, Boughton, *Municipal Dreams,* 166-167, 180-182. [↑](#footnote-ref-111)
112. Schattschneider, *Semi-Sovereign People*, 35. [↑](#footnote-ref-112)
113. *Liverpool Echo,* “Liverpool Council Loses Calderstones Park Battle in High Court,” 18 January 2019. [↑](#footnote-ref-113)
114. Liverpool Echo, “Wirral Green Belt Sites Could Be at Risk – This is What It Means to the People at the Heart of the Saga,” 26 August 2018. [↑](#footnote-ref-114)
115. Liverpool Echo, “Plans to merge affluent village with 'high crime community' branded 'act of vandalism'” 1 April 2019 [↑](#footnote-ref-115)
116. Senior *et al.,* “Residential Preferences,” 337.  [↑](#footnote-ref-116)