

Summary of the Society's submission to the House of Commons Select Committee looking at the operation of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

- Section 52 does not specify what “garden city principles” are and we think that certain key criteria should be specified in more detail. The use of the term “garden city” or “garden suburb” should only occur in the name of the place if the location meets those criteria.
- Essentially a “garden city” or “garden suburb” requires both the built and natural environment to be designed and then managed as a single entity by a single authority. Local authorities are not structured to do this.
- It is essential that residents be allowed an effective say in how their “garden city” should be built and developed over time. The overarching objective of any “garden city” must be to enable residents to live and work in a beautifully designed, healthy and harmonious place.
- A beautiful and successful garden city depends on good design in all matters. Detail matters. It is of little use framing a high level statement about what a good idea it is to use garden city principles to build more houses as Section 52 of the NPPF does, unless other legislation and supporting organisational structures enable good design down to a detailed level.
- Responsibility for all services into any new “garden city” should be controlled by its single authority. So, for example, nothing should change in a garden city without the proper overall consideration and approval for that being agreed by its single authority.
- Similarly, where smaller “garden suburbs” are concerned, local authority input should be restricted by covenants to ensure that the design is not compromised but enabled.
- Our overall recommendation to your Committee is that any new garden city should be managed outside normal, current, local government control since conflicting interests only destroy the very thing that is being promoted.
- In our view, “garden cities” and “garden suburbs” will cost more to develop than mere estates and new towns. Politicians should recognise this from the outset, face the issue and make provision for it. Like any garden, its ongoing management requires care and nurture and must be set up to operate sustainably.