

Thinking New Towns

Did you grow up in a new town?
What was it like?
Find out more inside



Stevenage

Thinking New Towns

Stevenage

This education resource is part of the Talking New Towns oral history project about the Hertfordshire new towns. It is funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund.

The partner organisations are: The Dacorum Heritage Trust Ltd, Welwyn-Hatfield Museum Service and Stevenage Museum.

A separate resource pack is available with content from Hemel Hempstead and Hatfield.

Published by Stevenage Museum 2016



Introduction

Did you grow up in a new town? In this booklet you can find out more about the new towns in Hertfordshire, as told by people who planned, built and lived here. If you want to find more stories, pictures and to see the animation you can go to www.talkingnewtowns.org.uk.

The information and activities in this booklet are aimed at young people and relate to subjects like PSHE, maths, history, art, drama and geography. The activities link to resources on the website or can be used as standalone resources.

If your school would like to book a visit to the museum, a workshop or just have more questions then please contact us at:

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Students at Featherstone Wood build their own new town

What is a new town?

A new town is a planned town, built in a short period of time. It is typically built where there was no large town before. The planning is usually done with some idea of what the ideal city might look like.

Before the new towns

In the decades before and after the First World War, people continued to move from the country into the towns and the housing was overcrowded and outdated. Many working people lived in dark, damp houses, with few of the facilities we take for granted. Things needed to change.

Some forward-thinking employers had built model villages for their workers, places like Port Sunlight and Bournville. Another solution was suggested by Ebenezer Howard in his book *To-morrow: A Peaceful Path to Real Reform*. He outlined his vision for garden cities: planned, self-contained communities surrounded and limited by greenbelts, a blend of town and country with easy access to work and leisure. In 1903 Howard and his backers began building Letchworth Garden City, turning his ideas into reality and laying the foundation for the later new towns.

When the soldiers came home from the First World War the government they elected promised homes fit for heroes and following the 1919 Housing Act, a million council houses were built over the next two decades. The Becontree estate to the east of London in Barking and Dagenham was built by the London County Council. It was the biggest housing estate in the world, with 26,000 houses built between 1921 and 1935 housing 100,000 people. But London was still struggling to house its population.

Wartime destruction

During the Second World War the housing situation in London grew desperate as the city was bombed: thousands of houses were destroyed and many more damaged. With the end of the war in sight, planning began to tackle the pressing challenge to re-house Londoners. Sir Patrick Abercrombie's Greater London Plan laid down plans to build new houses in the bombed out areas in central London, the suburbs within the greenbelt and a ring of eight new satellite towns.

The New Towns Act

In 1945 the Labour government set up a New Towns Commission, headed up by Lord Reith. The Reith Commission recommended that:

- The new towns should have a population of up to 60,000
- They should be built as far as possible on greenfield sites
- There should be mainly single family housing at low density
- The homes had to be organised in neighbourhoods around a primary school, a pub and shops to meet everyday needs
- There should be a balance of housing and jobs

The Greater London Plan and the New Towns Act combined to preserve the greenbelt around big cities while providing decent housing for a growing population. Eight of the first phase of fourteen new towns in the 1940s were built around London.

The New Towns Act of 1946 gave the government the power to designate areas as new towns and set up development corporations to plan and build them. Stevenage was the first to be designated, followed in Hertfordshire by Hemel Hempstead in 1947 and Welwyn and Hatfield in 1948. Even though Stevenage was the first, building did not start until 1951. If you study the early draft plans of Stevenage from the 1940s the early idea is very close to how it looks today.



Surveying a site, 1960.

P9005



Activity

What is a difference between a new town and other towns developed through time?

Give two examples of earlier planned towns.

What was housing like for many poorer people in big cities?

What happened during the Second World War that made the problem worse?

What was the solution suggested for London?

The End of the New Towns

By 1979 a lot of the houses built under the New Towns act were being sold off, and the incoming Conservative government led by Margaret Thatcher decided to dissolve the development corporations. All remaining land and houses were sold off and the profit from the sale went back to the state finances. The new towns were left to develop along the lines of other towns across the country.



The town centre in the 1970s.

P2818

Silkingrad revisited

On 6 May 1946 Lewis Silkin, the Minister of Town and Country Planning, visited Stevenage. There was a public meeting and over half the town crowded in and around the Town Hall. Outside, loud speakers were strung up to allow people to hear what was going on inside. Everyone wanted more information about the proposed new town, they were worried about their small market town changing beyond recognition.

In August the New Towns Act was passed and within a week Stevenage was named as the site for the first new town. A public enquiry was held in October and the final Designation Order was made on 11 November 1946. Opponents of the scheme brought an action in the High Court for the Designation Order to be quashed. They argued that the Minister was obliged under the Act to consider fairly the objections raised in the public enquiry but that he had already made his mind up and had said so at the meeting back in May.

On a cold night in January 1947, all the Stevenage Station signs were changed to Silkingrad. The press were tipped off and the next day photographs appeared in national newspapers, part of the campaign against the new town. The protesters invented the name Silkingrad, as a reference to the cities of Leningrad and Stalingrad in the Soviet Union, a communist state seen as taking total control over all aspects of its citizens' lives. They felt powerless in the face of government determination to impose a new town. Despite the protests and appeals, the Designation Order was eventually confirmed in July 1947 and planning began in earnest.



This picture of the Silkingrad protest appeared in papers all over the world.

P9316

For and against

We were a contented little town of about 4000 people and nobody wanted to stop giving space to new people to live in, but it seemed unfair to plonk 80 or 90000 people in this wretched little village.

Jack Franklin

We will lose 10,000 acres of land. This land has been used for hundreds of years to supply all the milk for the area. Farming has been the main occupation of people in Stevenage. What will happen when a new town is created? We will also lose new houses that were only built 20 years ago as these houses will be pulled down to make way for the New Town.

Jean Farrer, wife of a farmer 1946

We've started up a new committee against the proposed New Town. People have sent us money from everywhere, even New Zealand. The High Court agreed that no New Town should be built, but we are still waiting to hear what the House of Lords thinks about it.

Arthur Cogg 1946

Transport is one of the most difficult problems of the future. If new towns are planned within a 30 miles radius of London, the already overcrowded roads to London will become much worse.

William E Franklin 1946



Crowds outside the Town Hall, 6 May 1946.

P2636

Activity

I think that many people in Stevenage are frightened as they do not know what was going to happen to the town. Many farmers don't want to lose their land.

Edward Messent 1946

In London I have only one gas ring to cook on and no hot water. We share a toilet and bathroom with everybody else in the house. To do my washing I have to lift a big bath from the garden up two flights of stairs and put it on the landing. If it's raining I hang the washing on a line on the landing.

Mrs Cotter 1946

We are unsure about the New Town but as we were promised a planned town and knowing that the New Town has to be built to help the people of London, we think that Stevenage is a fair place to build it. We will get better shops and we will be a part of the new future of Britain.

Eileen Harding 1948

Our youngest daughter, Daphne, loves to be out in Stevenage. That was because when we lived in London, there was a very busy road, which meant that you couldn't let your children out. Now they have all the freedom they want.

Mrs Arnold 1954

The kids think Stevenage is great as it's the "country" you know. We never really had any parks where we lived in London, only Finsbury Park. So when they see all the wide open spaces they act like a couple of Red Indians.

Mrs Cotter 1946



Hay baling in Fairlands, 1957.

P6166

**What would you have done in 1946?
Make a note of the arguments,
then make your decision: for or against?**

For:

Against:

Overall, I decided for / against because:

Building Stevenage

Planning

Before building could begin, the plans had to be drawn up. Architects, planners and engineers were employed and began work at the Development Corporation's offices in Aston House. The master plan they produced laid down how the town would be built and some of the first residents were the builders needed to turn the plans into reality.

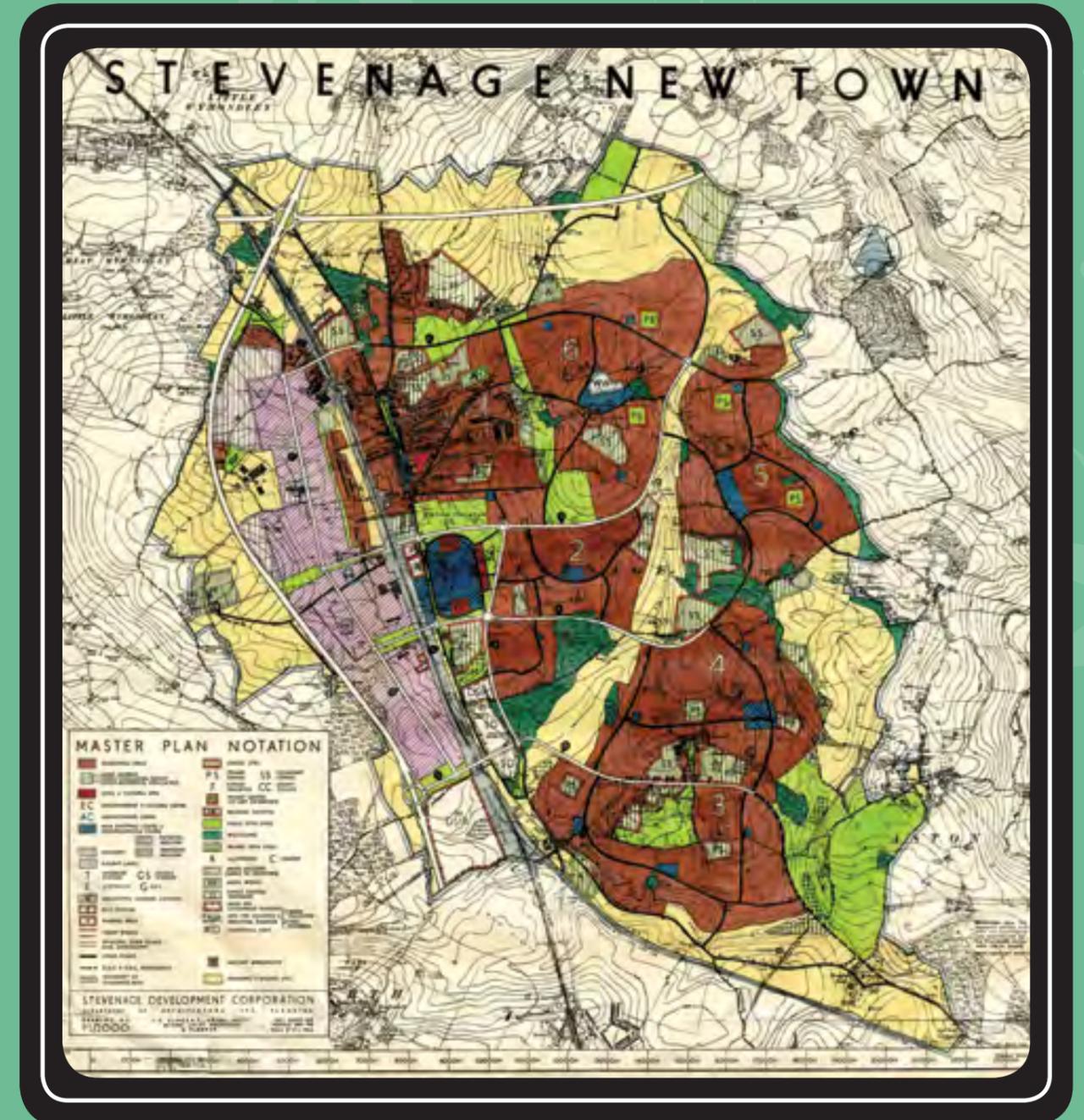
Eric Claxton

Eric Claxton was engineer for the new town from 1946, and chief engineer 1963-1972.

The job they set me to do was to be engineer to this little team who were designing Stevenage. And if you look at that original plan that we made in '46 and you look at the town of today, it's only different in detail.

I was immensely conscious of the fact that Lloyd George had given a talk in London amongst which he said, "And what is our purpose?" And he then answered his own rhetorical question: "to create a land fit for heroes to live in". Well, I wasn't enamoured of the land that we were made to live in, and I reckoned that perhaps this new town project was really the first decision to honour that state of affairs. So it put me very much on my mettle to try and create a very safe and convenient and comfortable town for people to live in.

Behind all this was my experience of the terrible carnage of wartime, and in my heart, I'd made up my mind that if I could possibly help it, nobody should ever be injured again. So, Stevenage sets out, and it set out from its very beginning to be as safe as I could create it.



The 1949 Masterplan

Michael Cotter

Michael Cotter was a builder, a union activist and eventually a Borough Councillor. He remembers when he first heard about Stevenage and the chance to get a house.

So one evening in 1951 he knocked on the door, it was late, night-time I think. I had been out electioneering anyway as was my wont and he left a message with my wife: "Tell Mike that they are recruiting building workers in Stevenage and that if you are successful and you got a job you're eligible for a house."

Now the firm I'd been working for, I'd been with them for nearly six years which was a quite long period of time at that time in the civil engineering industry. Well anyway, I said to the chap in charge the following Saturday, I'm not in tomorrow. I'm going to Stevenage to find out about getting a job. He said you don't want to leave us. I said it's not a case of wanting to leave you but having to leave you. If I get a job down there, there's a house to be obtained at the end of it and I'm going to get that house.

Activity

Planning a city is a way to try to prevent or solve the problems that appear when many people live in a small area. Match these problems with the solutions planners of the past came up with.

Problem:	Solution:
Dirty water spreads disease, killing thousands of people.	Planners make laws to protect the greenbelt.
Too much traffic on the road slows down journey times and causes pollution.	Take the traffic off the road: build a network of public transport to get people around towns and cities.
Urban sprawl eats up the countryside around big towns.	Aqueducts bring clean water into the city and sewers take the waste away.
	A network of sewers and pumping stations are built.

The role of the master plan

Here are some of the challenges Stevenage's early planners thought about. Can you think of any solutions?

Pollution from industry makes living conditions unhealthy.

Car accidents kill cyclists and pedestrians more often than other car users.

How will we keep the traffic moving?

How will people live day-to-day? What needs to be nearby? What can be a bit further away?

Read on to see how the planners, engineers and architects met the challenge and how things worked out.



The Stevenage way to build a town

Stevenage planners tried new ideas, including cycle and footpaths separated from the heavier traffic on the roads and roundabouts to keep the traffic moving. It was the first town in Britain to have a pedestrian town centre too.

Cycle paths

In the early years of the new town, over 40% of people cycled to work. Few families owned cars and the planners built a safe network of cycleways and footpaths away from the traffic.



Boys from Heathcote School join in with a Stevenage Road Safety Committee campaign, 1965. PPI445



The cycle path running alongside Six Hills Way, 1964 P6999

On your bike!

Activity

Can you persuade people out of their cars and back on to the cycle ways?

Make your case here:

A large, empty rectangular box with a black border, intended for students to write their persuasive arguments.

Roundabouts

Rules for the best use of roundabouts

- 1 Decide as soon as possible whether you wish to turn left or right or to continue forward.
- 2 Move into the appropriate lane well before the intersection.
- 3 Select low gear and adjust speed to about 20 m.p.h.
- 4 Maintain braking distance between your own and the vehicle ahead.
- 5 Watch the vehicles on the roundabout approaching from your right and adjust speed to pass behind the leader taking your proper position in your selected lane.
- 6 When ready to leave signal your intention to turn left in sufficient time and move into your exiting lane.

By this behaviour you will not only be able to GIVE WAY in the intended manner but you will aid all traffic to proceed on its way more quickly and safely.



The junction of Six Hills Way and Monkswood Way, 1957.

P6454



Ray Lenthall on how best to keep traffic moving in Stevenage

So Eric had formed this opinion quite early on, that the happy motorist was the motorist you kept on the move. He felt very strongly that if the motorist is kept on the move, he or she doesn't become agitated and agitation creates accidents. So he looked at the problem of major interchanges. How do you solve crossroad problems? And he felt that traffic lights was a bad solution because the traffic light deliberately interrupts the flow in one direction, and if you interrupt the flow, you frustrate your motorist, and a frustrated motorist is an angry motorist, and you get problems. And he was sure that there was a better solution to this, and he was sure that the roundabout was a better solution to this. And so he pushed very hard for a town with no traffic lights, but only roundabouts at its major crossroads.



Traffic lights at the junction of Six Hills Way and the Great North Road, 1956.

P6454

Pedestrian town centre

MOTORING By W. A. McKENZIE

A town centre without traffic: More white line confusion

MMOTORISTS are supposed not to like parking short of their destinations. But I will wager that the most contented of all drivers who took their wives shopping last week-end were those who descended on Stevenage New Town.

They came from far and near to the periphery of the civic centre, parked their cars with ease, and then escorted their wives and families through canopied ways to a parade of shops where they could stroll about without the inconvenience, noise and danger of passing motor traffic.

The New Town—well on its way to completion—is the first in Britain to be designed to fit the motor age.

Cars bringing business people and shoppers, lorries and vans supplying the shops, and the shopkeepers' delivery vehicles all concentrate on the periphery of the Town Square. The cars go to parking lots, the goods vehicles to loading bays at the rear of the business premises. Within the periphery there is no place for wheeled traffic except bicycles.

PARKING FOR 3,400

When the centre is complete, it will be a shopping area of 100 acres, surrounded by every kind of building for business, entertainment, education and health and with two additional squares—all free from motor traffic.

The scheme started in the Town Square six months ago when only a handful of shops were ready to open. Since then it has grown rapidly. It will eventually include more than 120 shops and other business premises, and, on the periphery, parking space for 3,400 cars.

Pedestrians and motorists alike are delighted with the scheme. Mr. John Mitchell, who lives with his wife and two children three miles from the town centre, told me: "We came from Notting Hill Gate 12 months ago. There, if we went shopping in the car, there was always parking trouble. Now we park easily on the perimeter."

Mrs. Lucy Claire, who went to Stevenage 15 months ago from Marylebone, had been accustomed to leaving her children at home on shopping expeditions. Now the whole family can go, and if the children run out of the shops they cannot come to harm.

The scheme is an object lesson to town planners everywhere.

Daily Telegraph, 1958.



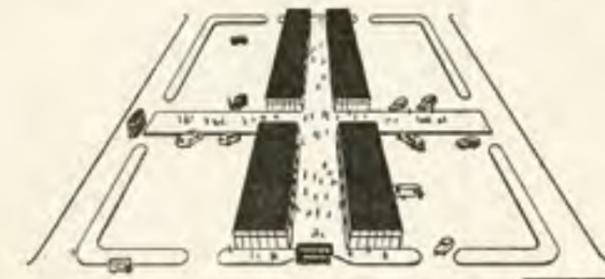
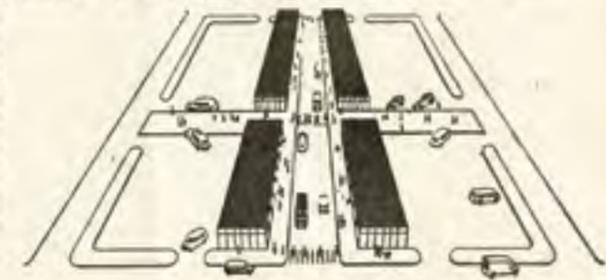
Stevenage Town Centre 1974

PEDESTRIAN OR VEHICULAR?

Below you can see our artist's impressions of the proposed Stevenage Town Centre. One illustration includes the road between the main row of shops, while the other shows a pedestrian way in place of the road. These drawings do not seek to show you what the Town Centre will look like but they are near enough to the actual plans to illustrate both sides of the much discussed question—What kind of Town Centre do you want?

On the right is to be seen the parade of shops divided by a main road. Buses and cars pass up and down, stopping to allow their passengers to alight and then proceeding on their way. This sort of centre is what the big traders want us to have—the busy atmosphere that is created by the constantly moving traffic and the crowds jostling on the pavement is good for trade, they say. This is the Centre that the Development Corporation have decided upon, after stating many times in the past that there would be no road through the middle of the Town Centre.

Is this the type of Town Centre you want?



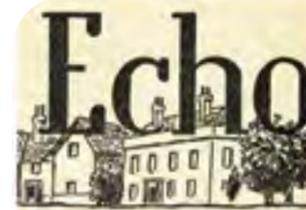
At this moment Stevenage is in a position to provide all the ingredients for a perfectly planned Town Centre. Naturally, the most important part of this will be the main parade of shops. When these shops are opened there will be approximately 30,000 people on the doorstep eagerly waiting to see them, to say nothing of the extra thousands from surrounding districts and the casual shoppers passing through.

On the left we have the same parade of shops but this time the buses and cars do not run through the centre but keep to the road running around the shops. Here parents and children can wander from one side of the shops to the other in perfect safety. This is the kind of Centre that the majority of the organisations in Stevenage think would be the best one for the town.

You sir, and you madam, will probably be doing your shopping here in twenty or thirty years' time when the Development Corporation has long departed. Is this the kind of Town Centre YOU want?

Nowhere in England is there a completely planned pedestrian shopping centre, but here we have the potential shoppers, we have tradesmen wanting to come here to sell their goods and we have the planners. Somewhere along the line a spanner has been thrown into the works and it would seem that we are being offered just another shopping centre. Perhaps it is not too late for public opinion to change the plan.

The Stevenage Echo, voice of the Stevenage Residents' Federation, January 1954 (above) and October 1954 (below).



OCTOBER, 1954.

No News of a Town Centre

WHAT is happening about our Pedestrian Town Centre? Many months ago we were given to understand that only a "Yes" was needed from the Ministry and then the wonderful plans of our shopping centre would be implemented. Every utterance at that time from laymen to the highest official was in favour of a Pedestrian Centre.

Unfortunately, in the ensuing months the Corporation have not yet made any public statement. Meanwhile, disquieting rumours have again circulated as a result of this silence.

RUMOURS

We hope that these rumours are unfounded; it was clear enough last January that the pedestrian centre will be a success only if it is something new, imaginative, in keeping with the adventurousness of a new town.

We can be confident that the Corporation will not be so foolish as to approve a final plan without making it public, and seeing whether it meets with the public approval first. They have already consulted the residents on the Redwell Community Centre and other projects, and would certainly not be so discourteous as to do otherwise with the much more important and controversial project.

Therefore, we hope and expect that the Corporation will shortly publish its final plans for the long delayed centre, and that we shall find that they are in fact akin to those promised to us.



Building a neighbourhood

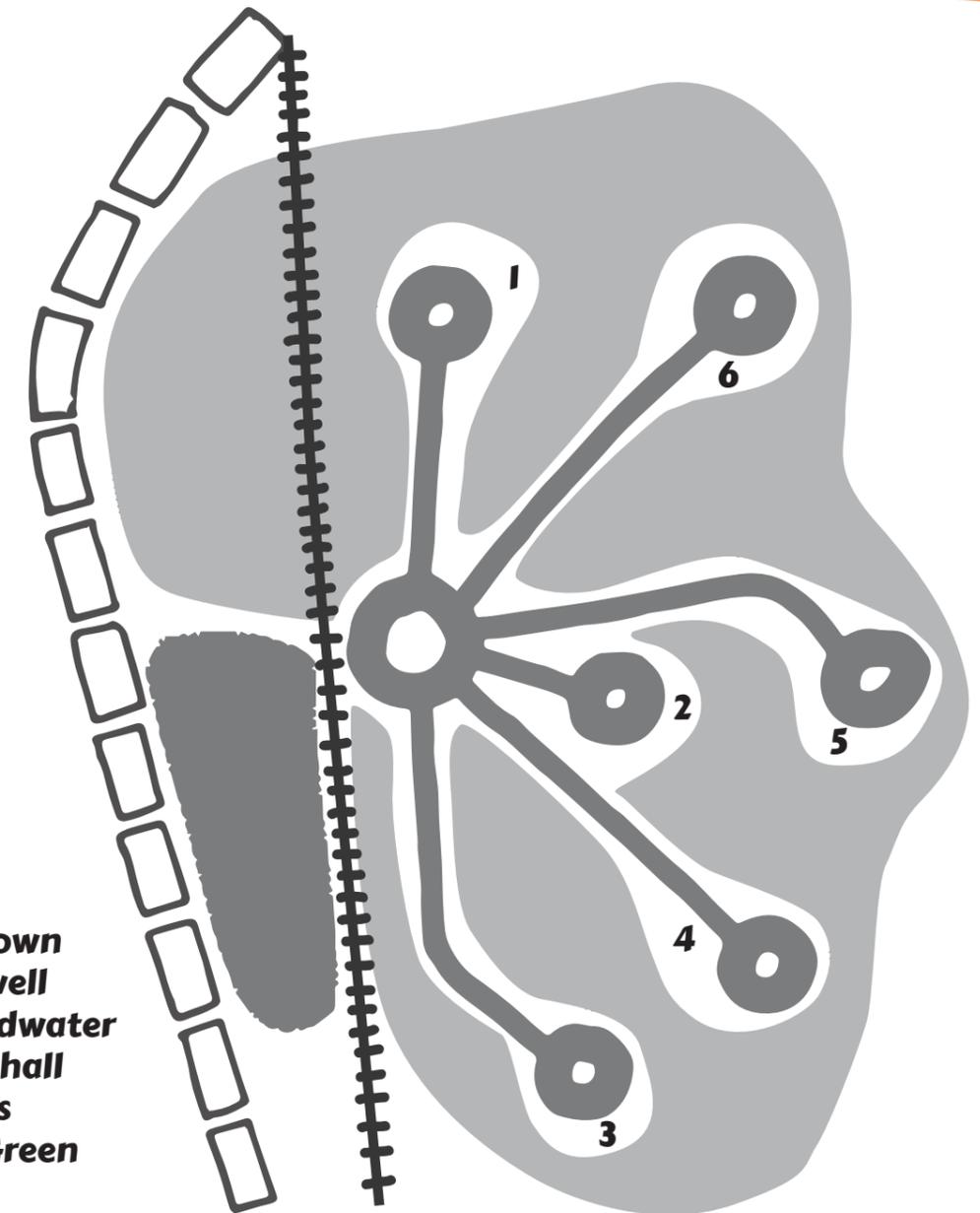
The neighbourhood is a key element in new town planning. The Stevenage masterplan identified six neighbourhoods, each to house 10,000 people.

Activity

The cycle ways, the pedestrian town centre and the roundabouts were new features when implemented in Stevenage.

How well did they work:

	Successes	Problems
The bicycle paths are separated from traffic		
Stevenage mostly has roundabouts instead of traffic lights		
A pedestrian town centre		



- 1 Old Town
- 2 Bedwell
- 3 Broadwater
- 4 Shephall
- 5 Chells
- 6 Pin Green

This 1946 plan shows the order in which the neighbourhoods would be built.

The idea of the neighbourhood plan came out of the Greater London Plan, 1944 it was, where Abercrombie suggested the 10,000 neighbourhood was a good idea as a residential base. And that was adopted and we saw no reason at the time to do something differently. To be quite frank about it none of us had any experience in those days of building new towns. I mean huge communities lots of experience in building estates, residential estates but that is a different thing altogether.

My general view now is that the neighbourhoods are too big. Their areas are all right where they are located, they are too big to be called neighbourhoods and they should have been possibly split down in to residential areas or units. Probably about a third of the size.



The mobile library in Broadwater Crescent, 1955.

P3708

Because many years ago we had a social survey done by Peter Townsend and a colleague of his and they found quite rightly that in a neighbourhood the people that lived at one end of a neighbourhood had no connection whatever with the people that lived at the other end of the neighbourhood, they were like strangers. But the neighbourhood next door, the other side of the road, they had a lot of communication. So the physical idea of the neighbourhood as a social or community wouldn't work in that sense. Too big.

Leonard Vincent, Architect

Activity

Neighbourhoods are based on the idea of walking. Think about your life. What do you do everyday? You should be able to walk to do those things. Now think about things you do less often. You could ride your bike or (at least today we would be more likely to) drive to do these things. List the things you do everyday (= nearby) and less often (= further away).

Nearby:	Further away:

Feeling like rolling your sleeves up and building a neighbourhood you would be happy and proud to live in? Why not get together in small groups and compare notes. Has anyone else thought of something you'd not considered? Have a go at drawing or building a neighbourhood together using materials in your classroom or at home. Finally, how does it compare to the neighbourhood you live in?



Pupils from Featherstone Wood plan and build their ideal neighbourhood.

Mobile shops

Houses were the first priority, other things like local shops and a doctor's surgery came later. Without a car and often with a young family, it was hard work in the early years. People could walk and get the bus into the old town to do their shopping or use the mobile shops, clinics and hairdressers that soon started to provide for the new town residents on their doorstep.

Anne Cotter

Anne Cotter discusses the shopping provision for early residents.

Eventually the Co-op put on a van and they used to come most mornings. And you could get practically everything in there which you paid more for of course. I queried this several times, you know. I'd been to the Old Town and I'd bought packet rice and I'd bought packet rice off of the van. It was perhaps tuppence or four pence dearer than the Old Town, then I queried it and I said why, he said it's because its pre-packed, but I said well I bought pre-packed rice, the same thing, in the Old Town. Oh yes we did pay through the nose.



The RSPCA caravan in Marymead.

P3987



The High Street Saturday market, 1953.

P431

Mrs Nunn

Mrs Nunn discusses how you could do your shopping in the early days of the new town, including the grocery vans that used to come round.

Where we lived on Marymead Drive most of the houses were built in that area but you just went say about a mile and there was just road ways without houses, buildings. Also there were no shops to get your food and everything. But there was a lorry or cars used to come round with food and we used to go inside and just pick your food out and that's how we had to get our shopping at first or get the bus into town.

Into the Old Town it was then because there was no town centre. There was just roads laid out for the town centre but there were no town centre shops at all and we just got the bus to the Old Town. And on the Saturday there was a market, we used to go there quite often.

Ray Lenthall about the problem of parking in Stevenage

We wanted to provide a garage or parking space per house, but the government standard said no. Initially we were asked to provide parking spaces on the basis of about, one car space per eight dwellings, and you can't do this attached to the house, so to speak.

You have to then solve the problem by creating garage compounds dotted round your housing areas. And we very soon found what we thought was going to happen, that as car ownership increased, this provision was inadequate, and secondly, that it wasn't very popular because people like to take their cars as close to their houses as they can. And certainly in the sixties and early seventies, we were working through the earlier parts of the New Town, trying to increase the level of provision.



Cars queue at the newly opened Chevron Garage in 1970.

PPI542

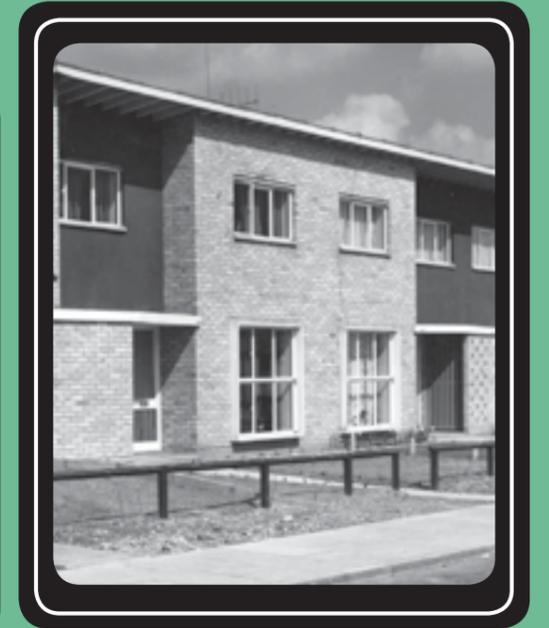
Building a house

House building got off to a slow start. Apart from a handful of prefabricated houses built in the 1940s, building only really got underway in 1951.

To get a house people had to find a job. For months they would commute from London until the houses were nearly ready. Then they were given a choice, and could pick one out of the three they were offered.



Interior, Half Hyde, Shephall, 1957.



P422 Houses in Marymead, 1956.

P3679

Broadband

Electricity

Solar panels

Cable

Helipad

What elements in your house connect you to the rest of the town?

Water

Wifi

Sewage

Telephone

Gas

House beautiful visits the new towns

From the many houses we visited in Stevenage we chose three to investigate more closely. One is occupied by a young married couple who both have jobs in the town; in (another) a teacher at a local primary school, his wife and two small children have lived for the past six years. (Both) couples had criticisms to make but all were delighted with their main sitting-rooms, shown on these two pages.



Bandley Rise Terrace House

The first room belongs to Mr and Mrs Hitchcock, who started their married life just under a year ago in one of the corporation's newest three-bedroom terrace houses in Bandley Rise. It costs them £2 15s a week to rent. Their combined dining-room and sitting-room is just over 21 feet long with a window at either end. It is heated by a slow-burning fire from a grate provided by the corporation. The door on the right of the picture leads from the dining end of the room into the kitchen.

On the whole they are delighted with their first home which, as our picture shows, they have spent a great deal of care and thought furnishing. But Mrs Hitchcock would dearly love a larger kitchen. They like to use it for occasional meals and have found that if there is to be room for a small kitchen table, there is nowhere for their refrigerator. This has had to go under the stairs which is far from convenient. The table is necessary too as a working surface, the only other one in the kitchen, apart from the sloping draining board, being very small.

They would also have liked larger bedrooms. Their own are not fully furnished yet, as they concentrated first on furnishing downstairs, but fitting in the furniture is going to present them with quite a problem. If it had just been

possible to provide fitted wardrobes the space would have been just adequate, but as it is, the only built-in cupboard apart from the airing cupboard is on eh landing and not big enough for their needs.

However well-planned and laid out a town may be, it must in the final tally be judged by the quality of its housing.



Sish Lane terrace house

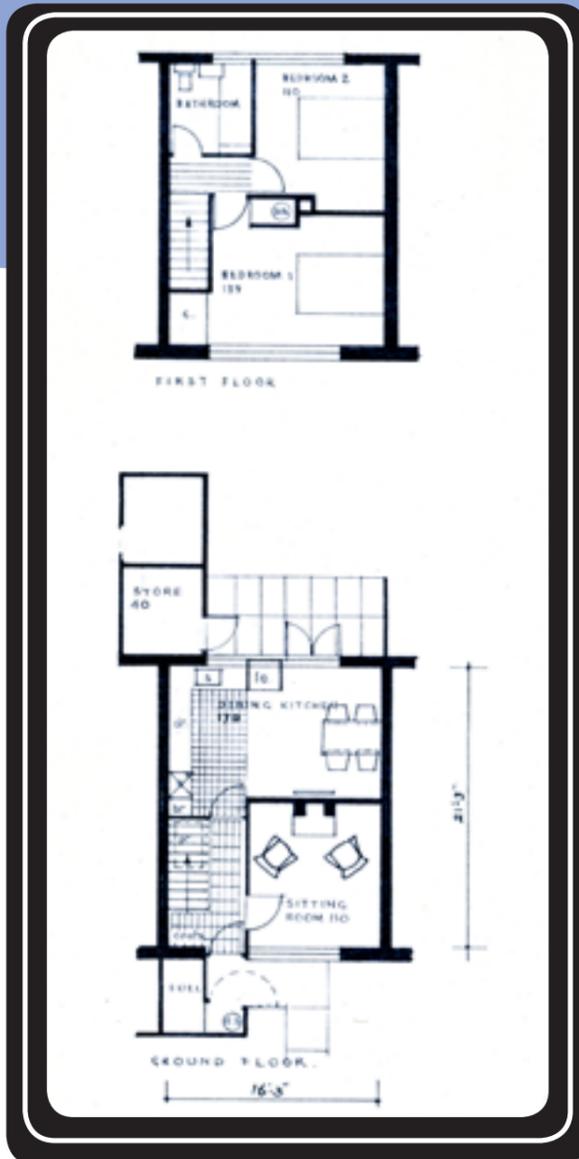
The teacher, Mr Lewis and his wife, also have a three-bedroom terrace house in Sish Lane. Their combined dining-sitting room is shown at the top of the previous page. It is smaller than the Hitchcock's room and has a hatchway, not a door, through to the kitchen. But they have an enormous advantage in the size of their kitchen, which has ample space for a table as well as for all the necessary appliances.

Their main problem is finding somewhere to keep a large pram and child's tricycle. There should just be room for the pram in passage which leads from the "back" door (which is actually next to the front door) to the kitchen - but Mr Lewis has fitted this with a work bench and the pram is out in the cold. They too would prefer larger bedrooms, but say very reasonably that they can't expect perfection for £2 10s a week. They have lived very happily in the house for six years.

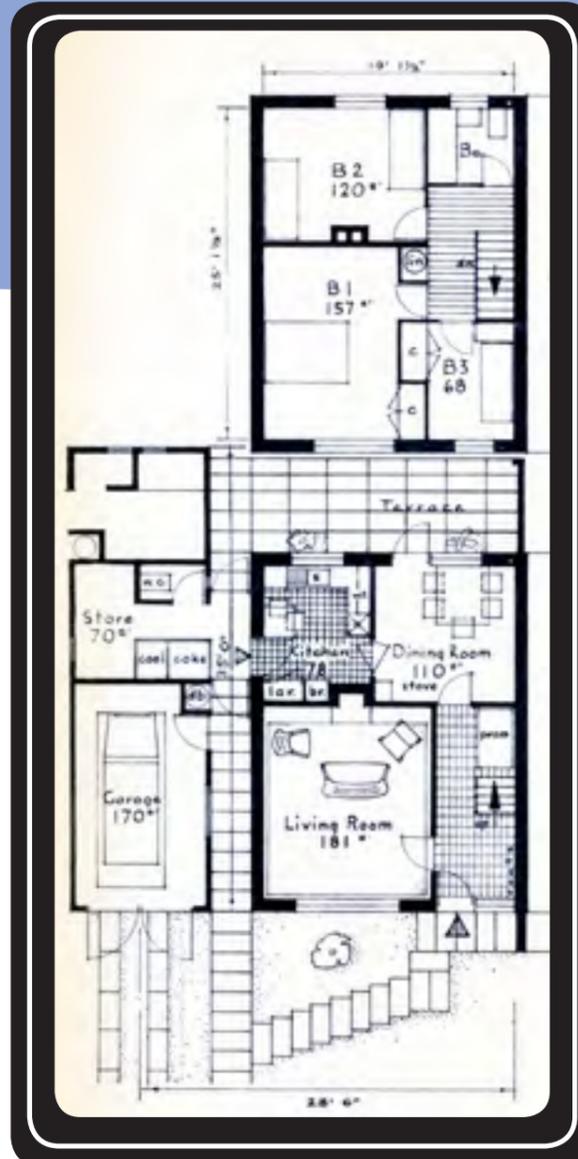
Activity

The planners wanted a mix of housing for different sized families. Most of the homes were going to be available to rent and the very earliest were built to high standards at low density. Then a squeeze on the public finances led to a demand that ten homes be built for the cost of nine, so the houses and their gardens became smaller, the terraces longer and the finishes plainer.

Draw a plan of your house. Add the furniture to show how you use the space. How does your house compare to the drawings and photographs here? What are the differences? And what is the same?



Two bedroom, four person terraced house, 745 square feet, 1953.



Three bedroom, five person semi-detached house, 1058 square feet, 1952.

Blank space for drawing a house plan and comparing it to the provided examples.

Pond to playground ...

Changes in play



Fishing in the town centre gardens.

P3526



The Monster of Bandley Hill by Mark Harvey.

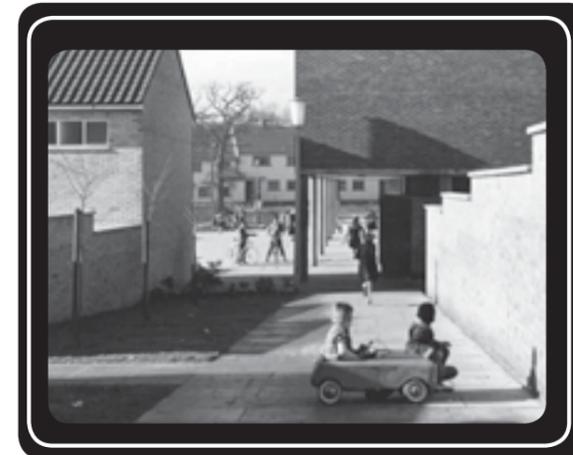
P6883

Sharon Taylor about playing by Aston Brook

When I was seven, in the school holidays we'd just go off down to Aston Brook or we'd get our bikes and go down to what is now Fairlands Valley. But in those days it was farmland with streams at the bottom of it. And we'd go down and play down by the stream, and we'd just be out all day and we'd go home at tea time. Have a sandwich to take with us, or whatever. And nobody thought anything of it, you know, and all our mates did it so you'd all go off on your bikes. And, we'd play in the bluebell woods, we had bluebell woods in Chells. So we'd go in there and make camps and things like that. Much freer than children are now, and very enjoyable. I mean, I had a very happy childhood - I look back on those days, you know, it was great.

Donne Buck about the founders of Bandley Hill adventure playground

It wasn't until 1967 that the idea of adventure playgrounds began to catch on, having been tried out and developed in London for quite some time before that. The local families in Bandley Hill decided that they needed a place for their children to play, which wasn't just formal swings and roundabouts type of playground, but a place where the children could determine their own play, build their own facilities to some extent, but where there would be skilled staff to keep an eye on things to help them and to maintain a certain level of order. And so Joan Herbert and her husband and a group of other local parents in Bandley Hill, set up a lottery, local lottery, where they collected a shilling a week from local families and gave a prize of course, or a series of prizes each week, and the profit was put into a fund to develop an adventure playground for local families.



Elm Green, Chells

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Bandley Hill adventure playground

PP883

Activity

Writing

Choose one of the pictures and describe what is happening.

Take it a step further and turn it into a story.

Drawing

Draw a picture to show how you play.

Design a playground of the future.



DIY Oral History Interviews

Oral history is a good way of finding out more about people in your community or in your family. On the Talking New Towns website people have been interviewed about moving to the new towns in the post war area.

- Are there people you would like to interview for example your neighbours or your grandparents?
- What would you like to find out?

Things to remember:

Closed questions are good for getting factual information in the beginning of the interview, like 'What is your name?' or 'What school did you go to?'

Open questions are important to give people a chance to give you more information with lots of details. You can ask 'What was it like to start a new school when you moved here?'

If people give you a short answer and you would like them to elaborate and tell you more you can use prompts or follow-on questions like: 'Did you make friends in your new school?' or 'How did that feel?' or simply 'Can you tell me a little more about that?'

Write your questions here:

Timeline of key events in Stevenage

Background:

Roman roads from London to the North pass through Stevenage.
 The six hills on London Road are Roman burial grounds from AD100.
 Great Northern Railway opens in 1850 ending Stevenage coaching trade while improving communications and encouraging industry.
 In 1944 Professor Abercrombie's Greater London Plan proposed a ring of satellite towns to relieve London of overcrowding problems.

1946

Stevenage set to be the first New Town
 The Stevenage Development Corporation is set up.
 First master plan of Stevenage is drafted by Development Corporation architects.

1947

Protest over compulsory purchase orders and court case in battle over new town

1948

First workers move to Stevenage.
 Construction commences.

1949

Barclay School opens.

1951

First houses are completed in Broadview.
 Houses built and let by Stevenage Development Corporation



1952

Construction of Bedwell neighbourhood commences.
 The Development Corporation begins building the first factory units and roads in the industrial area.
 The Residents' Association magazine, the Echo is published 1952-58.
 First London family arrives.
 Bay Tree Press Ltd is first new town industry to open.
 Broom Barns School opens.
 Bedwell Junior School opens.

1953

Construction of Broadwater and Shephall neighbourhood begins.
 The company De Havilland Propellers Ltd. comes to Stevenage.
 First doctors' surgery opens in Bedwell.

1954

The first Stevenage museum opens in the old town.
 Kodak Ltd moves into a development corporation factory unit.



British Visqueen (part of ICI) begin manufacturing polythene in Stevenage.
 International Computers and Tabulators, later ICL, move to New Town.

FACT: Rents inc. rates £1. 12 shillings for 2 bed and £1. 16 shillings for 3 bed without garage.

1955

Between 1955 and 1966, the Development Corporation produced its own magazine called Purpose.
Pin Green reservoir was built.
English Electric Aviation Ltd. moves to Stevenage from Luton.
The first new town bus services run though Stevenage.
Bedwell and Roebuck shops open.
Heathcote Secondary School.
Infant classes start at Peartree School.

1956

Queen Mother lay foundation stone at St. George's Church.
Mentmore Pens begins production.
Broadhall Community Centre is completed in Shephall Village.
Longmeadow School, Broadwater opens.
Oaks Cross shops, Broadwater open.
Bedwell Community Centre opens.
Marymead shops, Broadwater open.
Fairlands Infant School. Old Town opens.
Almond Hill Junior School, Old Town opens.
Peartree Junior School, opens.
On Wednesday October 24 50 Residents of Stevenage took a chartered bus to the House of Commons to protest high rents.

1957

Marymead shops, Broadwater, completed.
Willows Link shops completed.

1958

'Joyride' Sculpture unveiled by Sir David Bowes Lyon.



Work commences on Chells neighbourhood.
First Town Centre shop opens.
Stevenage Girls' School, Ashtree School, Featherstone Wood School, Shephalbury Secondary School and Bandley Hill Primary School open in the Shephall neighbourhood.
First links formed with Ingelheim.

1959

Stevenage pedestrian Town Centre opened by Queen Elizabeth II. The first traffic free shopping zone in Britain.



First Stevenage Day held on King George V playing fields.
Warren Spring Laboratory opens.

1960

Chells development begins.
Divisional Police Station Open.
Elm Green Shops open.
Chells and Barnwell Secondary School, Shephall open.

1961

Queen Mother attends the consecration of St George's Church.
Mecca Ballroom opens.
New Town Library opens.
College of Further Education opens.
Stevenage Football Club has first season at new ground in Broadhall Way.
Outpatients Department opens in Town Centre.
22,000 jobs now created. 15,500 in manufacturing industry, 6,500 in service Industry.

1962

10,000th Development Corporation house built
A1 [M] Stevenage Bypass completed.
Swimming Pool, Fire and Ambulance service open in St. George's Way.
Work commences on Pin Green neighbourhood.
Bowater opens.
Ambassador Bowl opens.
Nobel Grammar School, Chells, St. Hilda's R.C. Church, Shephall open.
Lodge Farm School opens.

1963

Chells neighbourhood centre shops, Collenswood Secondary School and Chells Secondary School open.

1964

First Furniture Industry Research Association moves to Stevenage.

1965

Bowes Lyon House opens.
Bedwell Secondary School, Chells opens.
Larwood School, Pin Green opens.

1966

Bedwell Telephone Exchange built.
An updated master plan sets aside an area in Pin Green as a second industrial sector.

1967

First adventure playground opens at Bandley Hill.

1968

Martins Wood Infant and Junior School opens.
Trotts Hill School opens.

1971

The first Superbus service introduced, running between Chells, Town Centre and Gunnels Wood Industrial Area.

1972

Lister Hospital opens.
Fairlands Valley Park is completed.

1975

Leisure Centre opens.
20,000th Development Corporation house built.

1976

Gordon Craig Theatre opens.

1977

Stevenage Museum re-opens under St. Georges Church.

1978

The Corporation transfer housing stock to the Borough Council.

1980

Stevenage Development Corporation (SDC) supervised and planned the growth of the town and dissolved in 1980. Between 1951 and 1980 SDC built over 20,000 homes. Population reached 73,000.

Thanks to all of the volunteers, teachers and children who have helped put this education pack together.

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Stevenage Museum

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