



## Transport for New Homes

BRINGING TRANSPORT AND PLANNING TOGETHER

# Visits to greenfield housing developments - our expanding towns

- Sustainable transport provision and use
- Wider conclusions and improvements to the planning system



During the last year Transport for New Homes have continued their visits to new housing developments, using a team of volunteers including students and campaigners.

- Volunteers fill in a questionnaire about what they saw on their visit in terms of sustainable transport and its use, and then upload photos of the development.

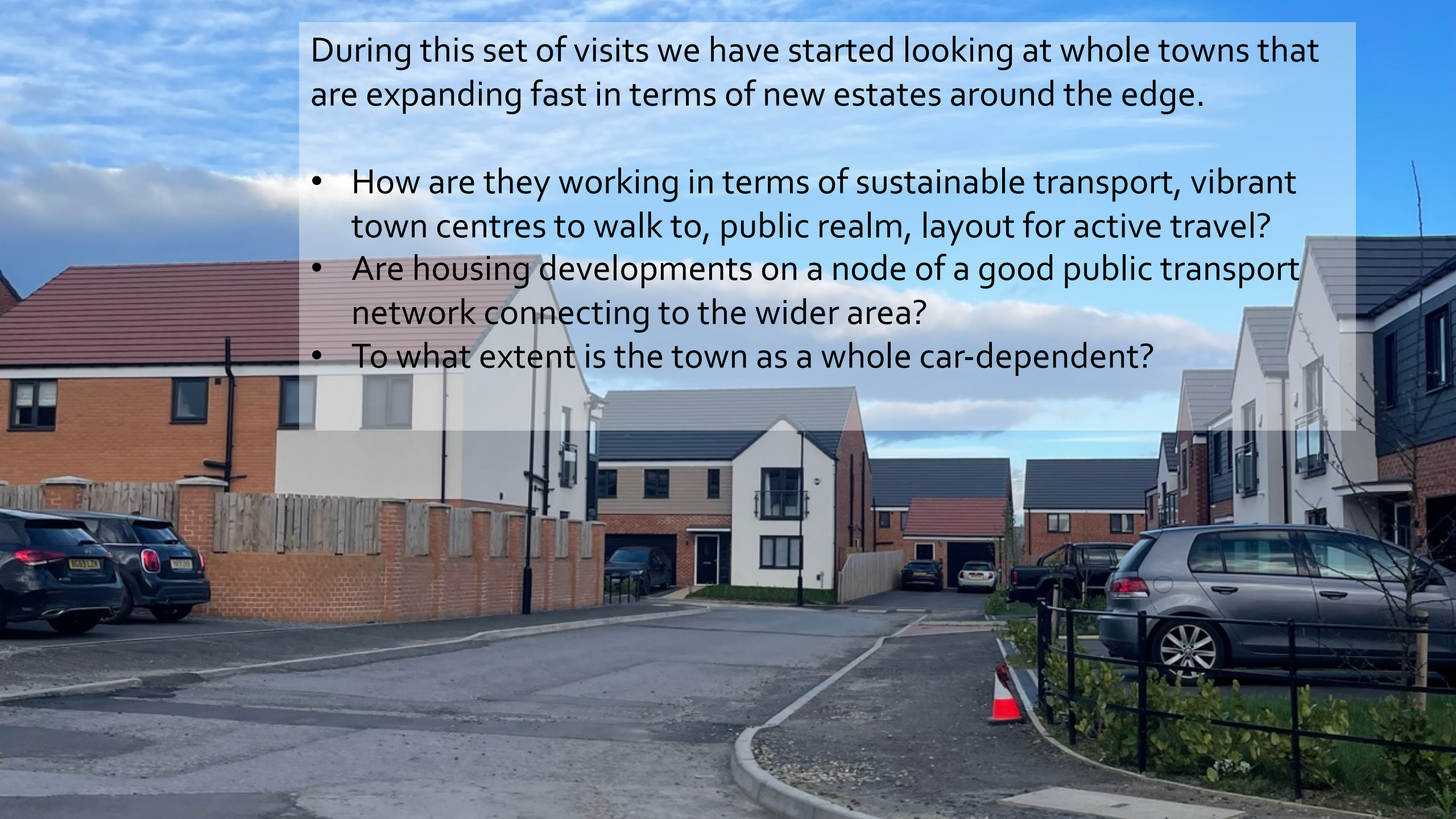
- They are still visiting and collecting data.

- Our 'State of the Nation' report on new homes and sustainable transport should be published later this year.



During this set of visits we have started looking at whole towns that are expanding fast in terms of new estates around the edge.

- How are they working in terms of sustainable transport, vibrant town centres to walk to, public realm, layout for active travel?
- Are housing developments on a node of a good public transport network connecting to the wider area?
- To what extent is the town as a whole car-dependent?



We are also including some visits to housing developments in NW Europe for ideas in terms of active travel and use of public transport, and accessibility without a car.



But the results (in England) have so far been disappointing, in that most greenfield developments appear to continue the car-based theme.

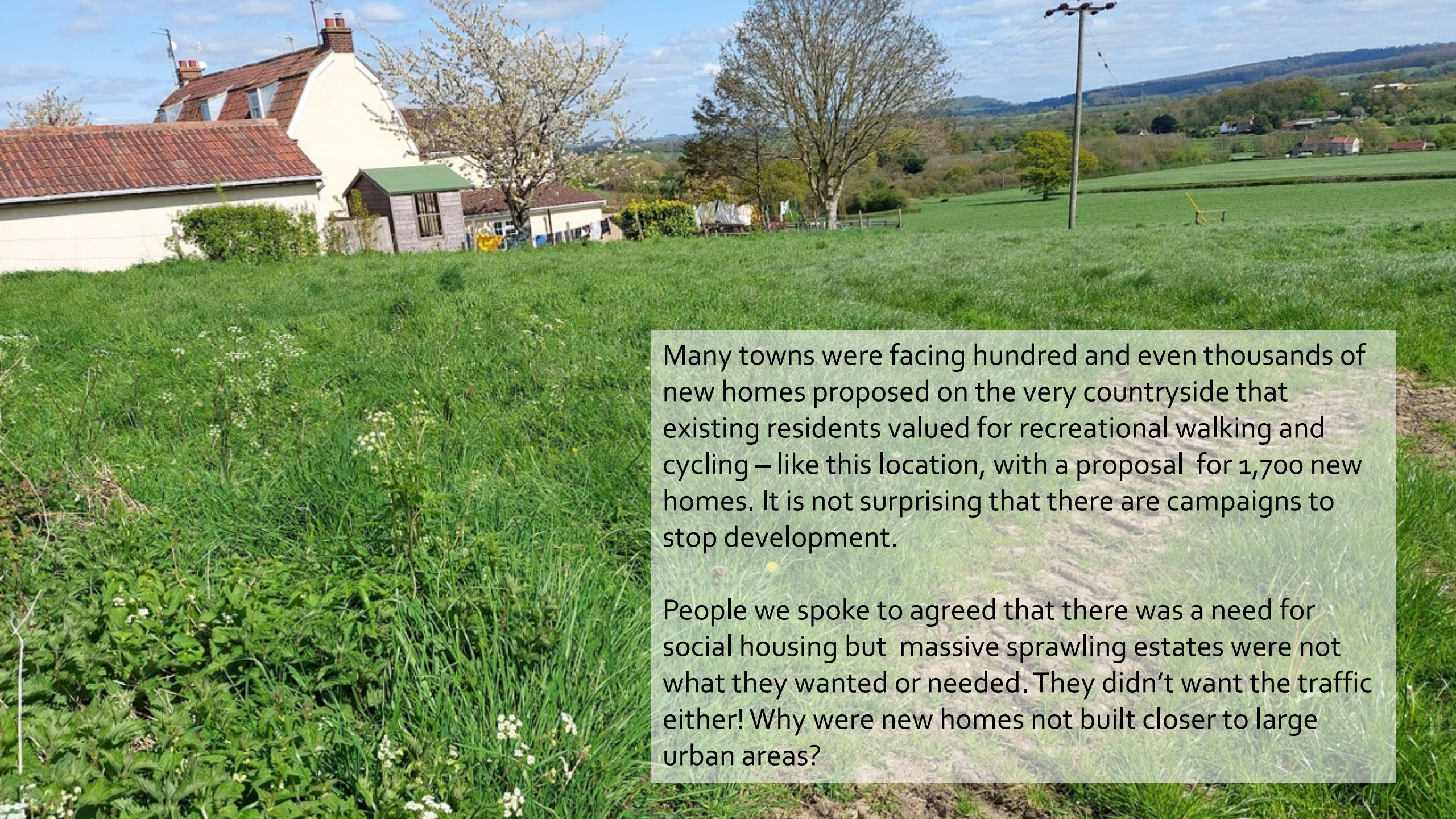
We are seeing a low density monoculture of homes built around roads and parking rather than mixed development, although there are exceptions which we will highlight in our report.

With volunteers travelling to new developments by public transport, a number of sites were very difficult to visit.





- The trouble seems to be an almost exclusive emphasis on the new homes themselves rather than the construction of a place for people to live locally and travel in and out of the area.
- We heard many complaints about how local facilities promised were undelivered by developers
- People on a budget had to afford not only the house but also the cars and running them
- There were complaints in some estates about parking wars – not enough parking – and about the expense of parking in town .
- Although they might be near the countryside more homes would soon appear on fields residents explained.



Many towns were facing hundred and even thousands of new homes proposed on the very countryside that existing residents valued for recreational walking and cycling – like this location, with a proposal for 1,700 new homes. It is not surprising that there are campaigns to stop development.

People we spoke to agreed that there was a need for social housing but massive sprawling estates were not what they wanted or needed. They didn't want the traffic either! Why were new homes not built closer to large urban areas?



- Car-based housing developments came with car-based destinations
- These made use of the transport infrastructure to support estates - new roundabouts, distributor roads, new bypasses etc.
- The 'local centre' was not the high street that planners might have been envisioned but
- Independent businesses which might bring life and variety to new development, and generate a local economy, are very rare (Poundbury is an exception and we are interested in others).

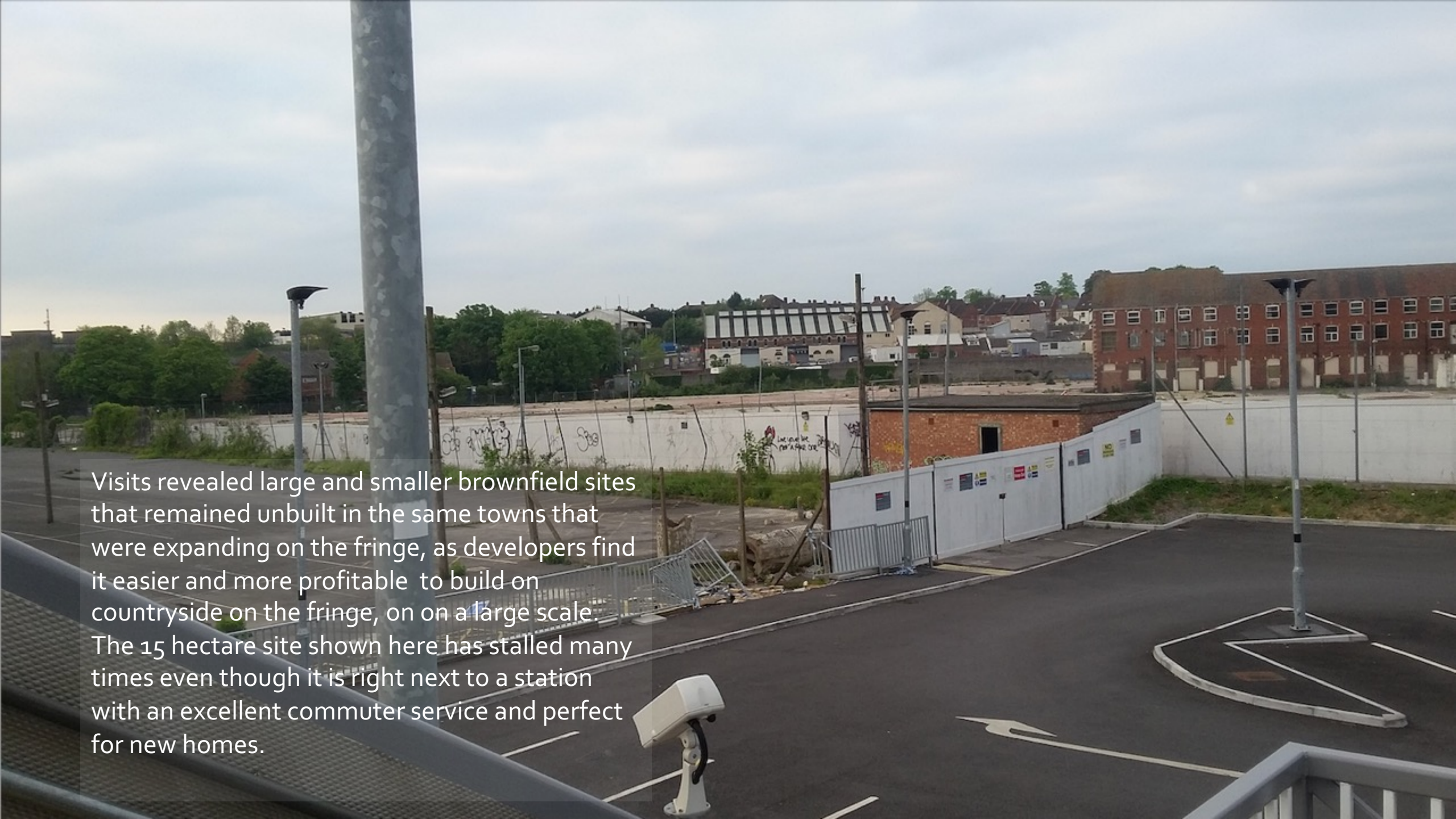




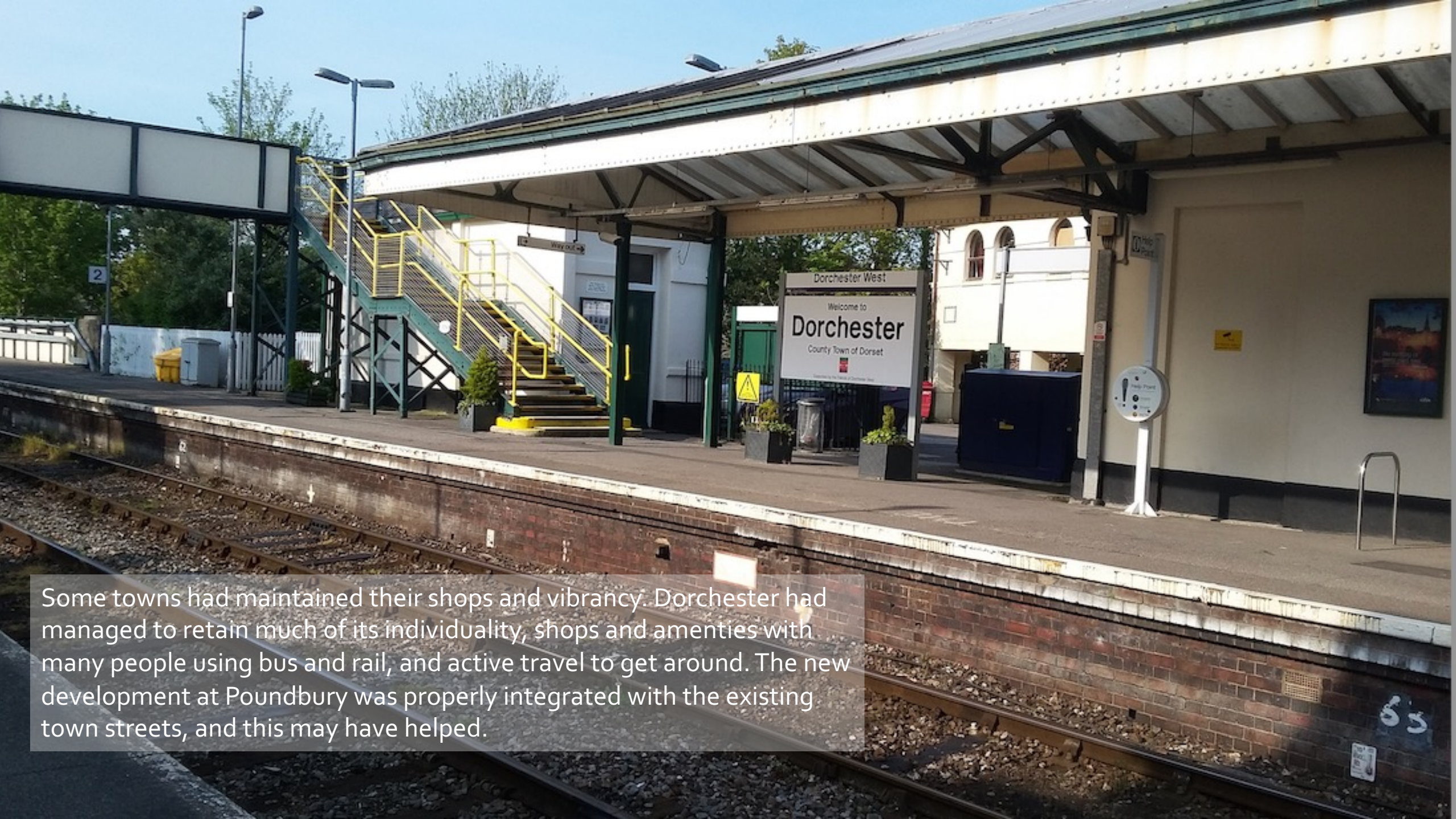
The car-based life style seemed to have 'escaped' to town centres. Towns chosen for massive greenfield expansion often had centres in severe decline with many empty buildings of all kinds, and public realm dominated by car parking. Big supermarkets and their car parks occupied prime positions and a lot of land. Bus stops were without time-tables and it was confusing to know which stop was for which destinations. Train stations were not incorporated into the public realm and often surrounded by car parks.



While urban designers have immeasurable enthusiasm and enhance our larger urban areas, many medium and large market town centres remain neglected. Building more layers of sprawling car-based estates seems not to invigorate the centre.



Visits revealed large and smaller brownfield sites that remained unbuilt in the same towns that were expanding on the fringe, as developers find it easier and more profitable to build on countryside on the fringe, on on a large scale. The 15 hectare site shown here has stalled many times even though it is right next to a station with an excellent commuter service and perfect for new homes.



Some towns had maintained their shops and vibrancy. Dorchester had managed to retain much of its individuality, shops and amenities with many people using bus and rail, and active travel to get around. The new development at Poundbury was properly integrated with the existing town streets, and this may have helped.



Our observations so far reveal how new homes on the edge of towns are particularly car-based.

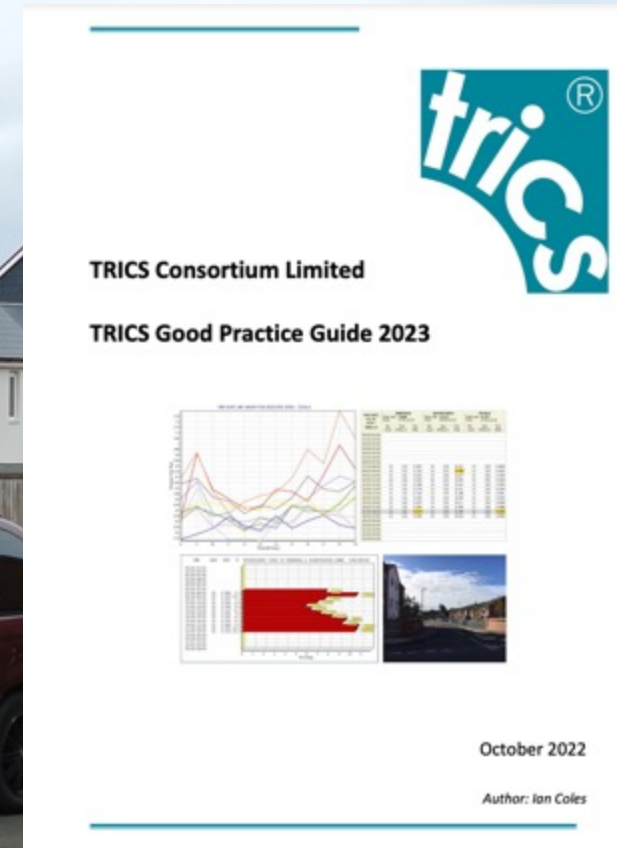
The concern is that these come with the establishment of an 'out of town' life style around driving, facilitated by the new roads that enable car-based retail and other amenities to be built on the fringe.

The driving culture then spreads to the whole town making it harder to work up the case for a more sustainable future. Driving becomes a near-necessity for all residents. The town centre is neglected and shops cannot compete with out of town retail, lower rents and free parking.

What about some data to tie in what we are seeing 'on the ground'?

'the vehicular analysis by location type did show an overall structured and consistent variation in trip rates.

The ranked comparison of TRICS location types showed the Edge of Town category ranking mostly at the top in terms of trip rates, with the Town Centre/Edge of Town Centre grouping of categories ranking mostly at the bottom'.

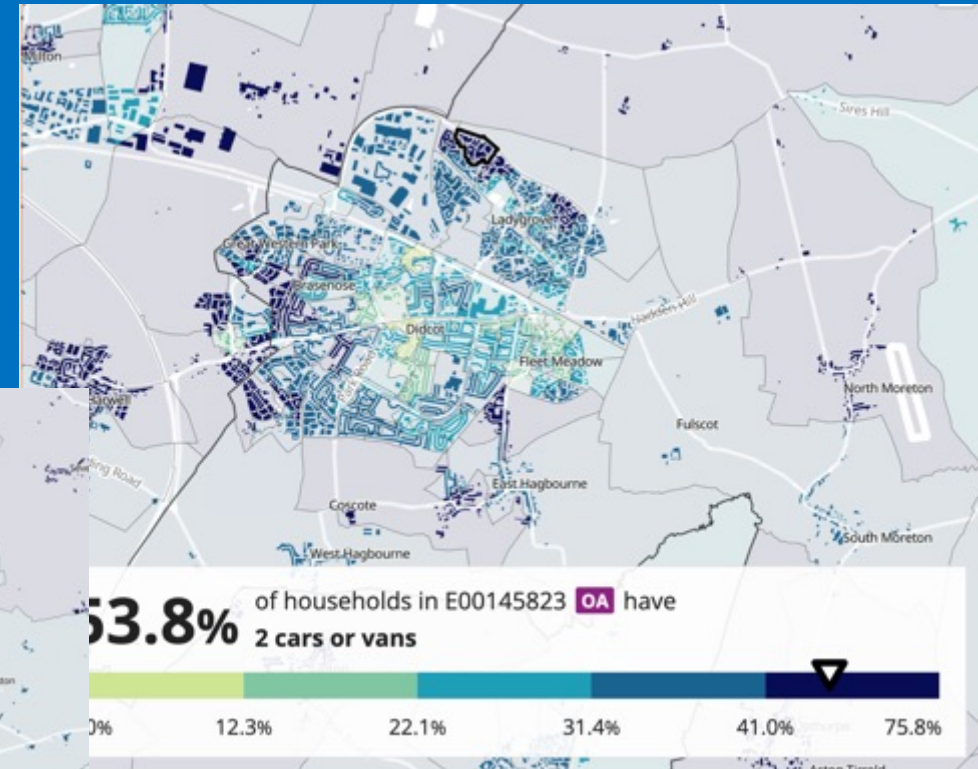
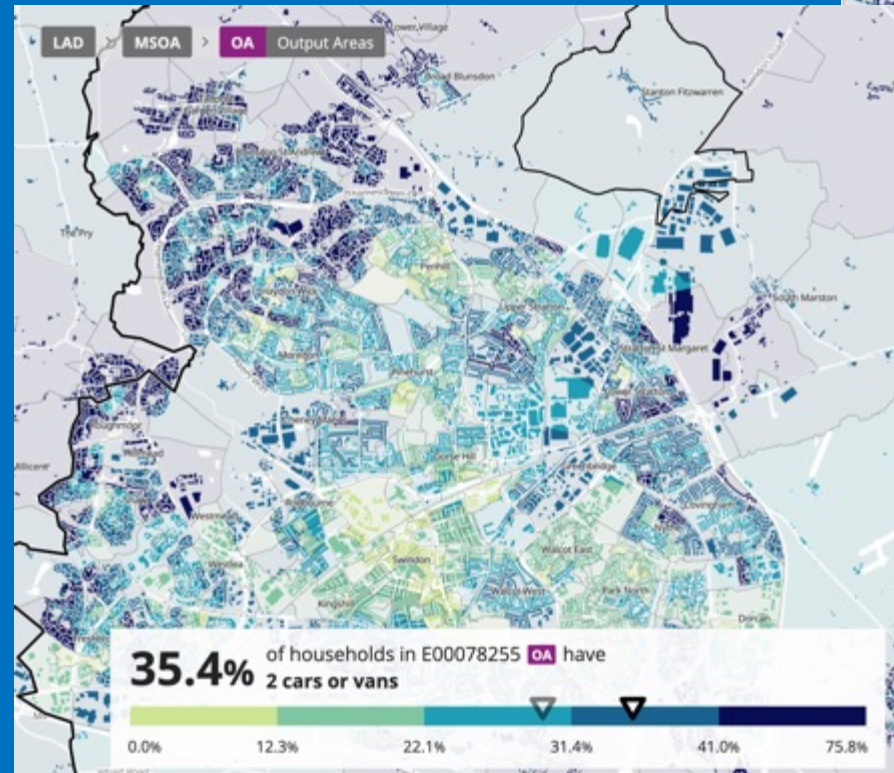


Car ownership data from the 2021 concurs with what we have seen on the ground also.

Estates on the fringe of towns generally very much car-based, both from our observations on visits.

Most recently built estates are where car ownership is highest.

Pattern shown here for Didcot, Oxfordshire, and for part of Swindon, the maps showing where people own 2 or more vehicles.



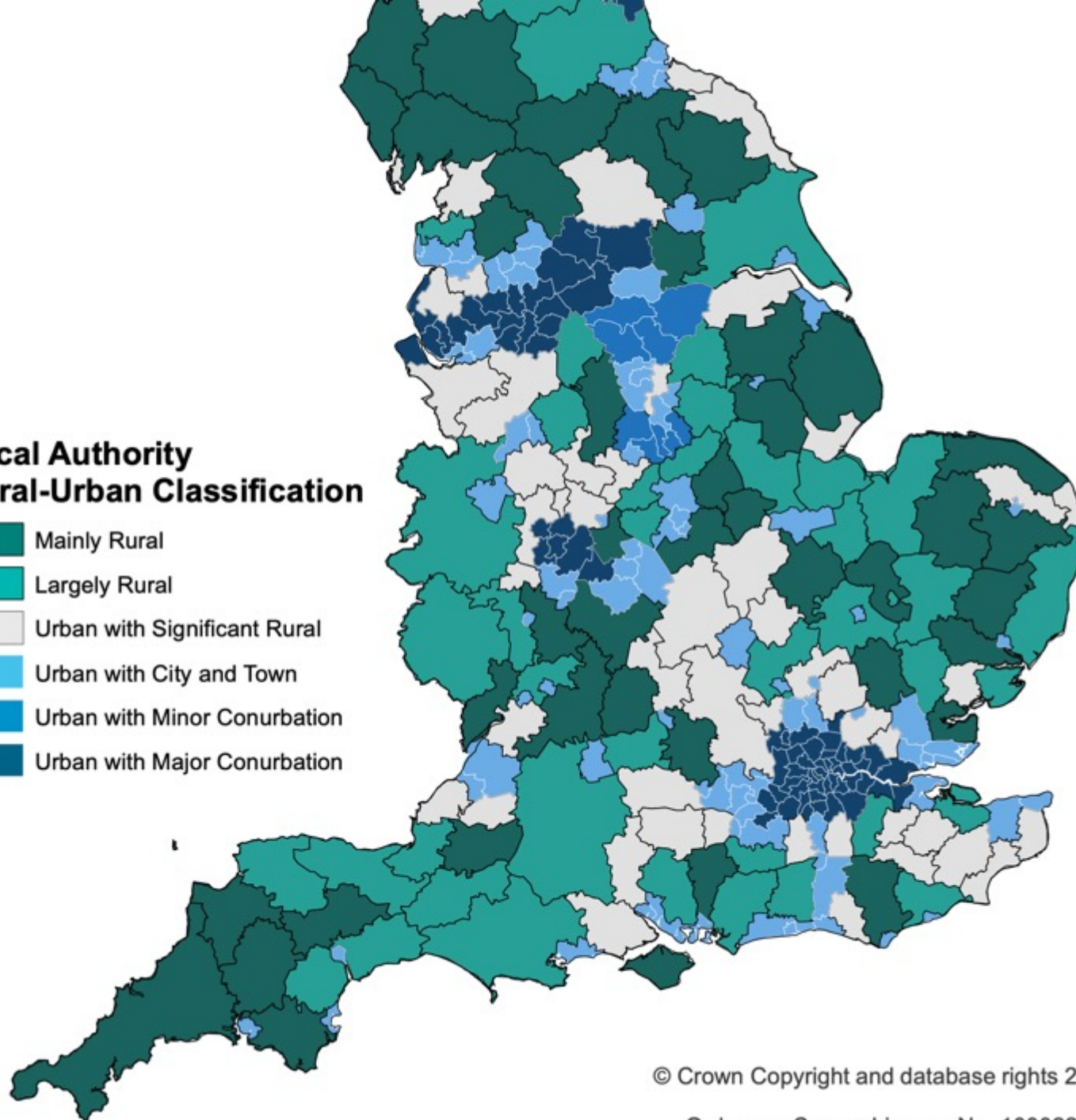
We seem to be building hundreds of thousands of new homes in rural areas where public transport is sparse and hard to provide. But the question is why? We have discovered that many local authorities with a 'mainly rural' or 'largely rural' classification have very large housing targets generated by the DLUHC 'method for calculating housing need.

These targets are a central cog in the planning machinery.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/about-the-digest-and-rural-definitions/about-the-digest-and-rural-definitions>

### Local Authority Rural-Urban Classification

- Mainly Rural
- Largely Rural
- Urban with Significant Rural
- Urban with City and Town
- Urban with Minor Conurbation
- Urban with Major Conurbation





How can one best build this many new homes in rural areas sustainably such that people use town centres, can walk into town or access good public transport for going further afield? A different way of doing things and better decisions on where and how to build are surely needed.

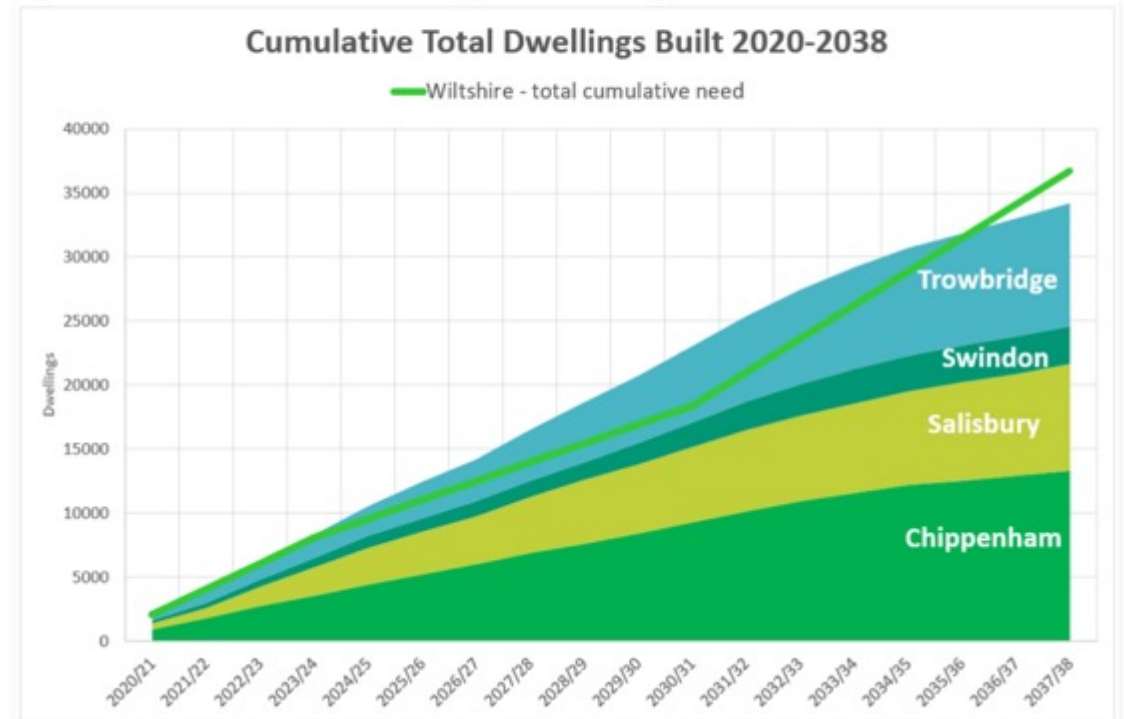


Local Authority	Classification	Number of new homes required in Local Plan
South Norfolk and Breckland	'Mainly rural' and 'Urban with significant rural'	44,500
Mid Suffolk	'Mainly rural'	9951
Breckland	'Largely rural'	15,298
Braintree District	'Largely rural'	14,430
Malvern Hills	'Largely Rural'	10,500
Herefordshire	'Largely rural'	16,500
Tewkesbury	'Largely rural'	35,000
West Oxfordshire	'Mainly rural'	15,950
Stratford on Avon	'Mainly rural'	14600
Wiltshire	'Largely rural'	44,000
East Devon	'Largely rural'	17,100
Weymouth and Portland	'Largely rural'	15,5000
Mendip	'Mainly rural'	9,635



## Housing Delivery Paper

Figure 7: cumulative total dwellings 2020-2038 by HMA and cumulative need



Areas that are expanding particularly fast need a coordinated approach in terms of modern planning, site selection, public transport and town centre improvement. Building more and more car-based outer suburbia can't be a sustainable way forward.

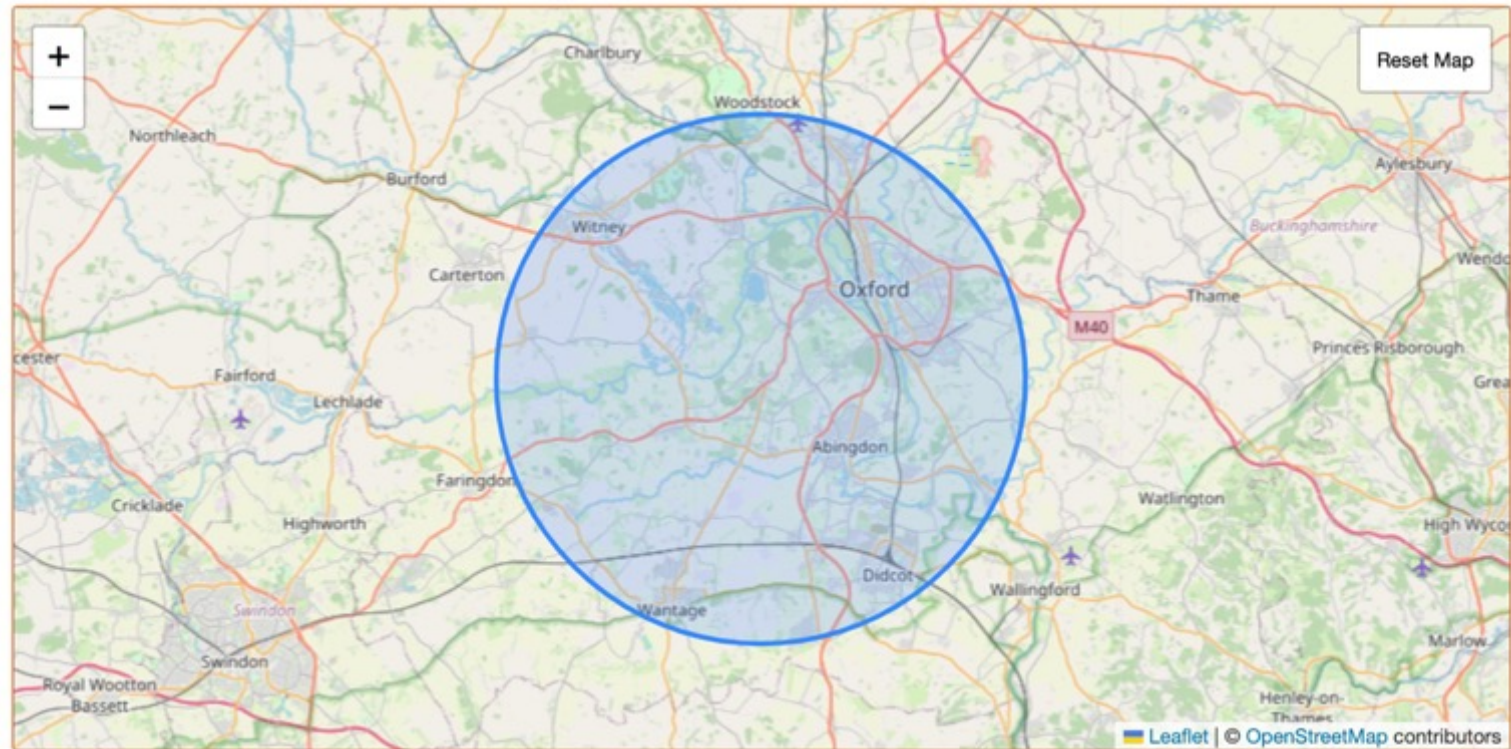
The numbers game so central to the NPPF and Local Plan production, and the lack of cross-boundary strategic working, poses a barrier to investment in the right kind of transport and the right locations to build.

Many areas due for massive increase in population do not have an integrated transport system to connect people to their workplace or to education and other services, despite an ever-growing demand for travel.

## POPULATION AROUND A POINT.

Human population within a distance, from any point in the world.

Select a radius and click on the map.



Estimated population within circle in 2025:

# 381,746

The circle also contains, 1579 bus stops, 0 tram stops, and 13 metro and train stops.



The work by Create Streets/ Sustran re-imagining development at Chippenham shows how differently things could be done. We hope that our future report will give further insight into the problem of providing the right homes in the right places, and connected by the modern integrated transport.