

# Food Planning in Garden Cities: The Letchworth Legacy

Pioneering urban agriculture  
and food integration into urban  
planning and design

Yves Cabannes and Philip Ross

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RUAF Occasional Papers Series



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Coming up to celebrating 20 years since its formation in 1999, the RUAF Global Partnership on Sustainable Urban Agriculture and Food Systems (RUAF) is charting its direction as the leading international community of practice, developing innovative solutions to food systems and policies in towns and cities. The RUAF partnership works with local, regional and national governments that are adapting and changing their policies as urban food systems evolve rapidly in the 21st Century.

The RUAF partnership has developed vast expertise, captured in its knowledge base ([www.ruaf.org](http://www.ruaf.org)). RUAF partners regularly synthesise their local, national and international knowledge exchanges, advocacy and learning activities and disseminate this synthesis on-line through the Urban Agriculture Magazine (UAM), RUAF papers and up-dates, as well as partner publications and international meetings.

This publication “Food Planning in Garden Cities”, co-authored by Yves Cabannes and Philip Ross is a continuation of this development, but also the first in a new initiative called Occasional Papers on Food Systems and Urban Agriculture. As the RUAF partnership continues to expand its network and expertise and stimulate researchers and practitioners to share their work in progress, providing new insights and stimulating debate, such a series has great potential.

“Food Planning in Garden Cities”, is a contribution to the successful integration of food into urban planning. Urban agriculture (UA) and City Region Food Systems (CRFS) are fast gaining the attention of planners and policy makers across the Global South and North, because of persistent food insecurity and rapid urbanisation. City governments increasingly recognise both their responsibility and opportunities for building more sustainable urban, and city-region, food systems, which is made evident with the signing of the Milan Urban Food Policy Pact, and the New Urban Agenda.

Although several urban planning and policy initiatives to include food and support UA have emerged in communities across the global south and north, the work is far from complete. Food is still not part of mainstream urban or regional planning. Integrated territorial planning and urban planning processes, from neighbourhoods up to national levels, offer opportunities to implement the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG), and involves multiple government departments as well as participatory processes, including community and other stakeholders.

Some of these concerns already formed the basis of thinking that led to the foundation of the Letchworth Garden City at the turn of the XX century. The garden cities were pioneering and recognised both the value and need for agriculture and food in the city and its surroundings, addressing social economic and environmental issues in an integrated way. This publication shows that Garden City principles related to land and community involvement and management, the involvement of private sectors, as well as the linking to other values in cities, and various tools and partnerships, are highly relevant today and may stimulate further thinking and development of sustainable city region food systems.

We thank Yves Cabannes, long time RUAF Associate and Emeritus Professor at UCL/ DPU and Philip Ross, former mayor of Letchworth Garden City for their contribution. We sincerely hope that this first number will stimulate other RUAF partners to keep the Occasional Working Papers Series on Food and Urban Agriculture alive and well.



# 1. Planning food in garden cities

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Letchworth, the world's first Garden City sits about 50 kilometres (32 miles) north of London. Its design was meant to bring the best of town and country together as defined in Ebenezer Howard's visionary 1898 book *Garden Cities of To-morrow*. Today, geographically, demographically and physically Letchworth leans in part towards London and the metropolis and in part towards the more rural region of the East of England. As an unintended metaphor for this, by chance, today half of the town's population receive London-based local television and half receive television programmes focused on the East of England and the rural economy.

The business of Letchworth and its population isn't farming, but agriculture and food formed part of the original plan for Letchworth and those principles remain strong today. One of the things that made Letchworth different from settlements that went before it was that it didn't separate out people and their living space from food production. There was also a vision of a City Region with its own food system or infrastructure. Visit and tour the town today and you will see generous green spaces and agricultural land in plenty.

Garden Cities are often studied with a view to their architecture and master plans, however this paper explores and revisits one aspect relatively little studied: how food was planned within garden cities.

This explorative work considers the contributions of key actors that turn ideals into reality.

- It starts with E. Howard [see picture 1] and his philosophical vision for Garden cities; exploring what have been his key contributions, as far as food is concerned.
- We look as well at the contribution of the first Garden City planners, Barry Parker and Robert Unwin, and more precisely at what place had food in the original 1903 master plan and those that followed.
- Next, we focus on what of these original principles remains in Letchworth today of

these original principles and this is done through a detailed multi-scalar examination of the various food related spaces and their use. It concludes on the legacy of the City region as a concept.

- We then examine how Letchworth positively contributed to food production in times of both World Wars and discuss why such a resilience and uniqueness was possible and propose three explaining factors that led to creative and multiple food related partnerships through time. This section highlights the contributions of residents and their organisation, and primarily the Horticulture and Allotment Society, and tries to identify the extent they shaped specific food spaces.
- Finally, we draw lessons from Letchworth, as the first Garden City, that could be useful for food planning of 21<sup>st</sup> century City Regions in other parts of the world.

## 2. Garden Cities as pioneers of Urban Agriculture and integration of food into urban planning

### 2.1 The social vision and the social city: Ebenezer Howard

This section will briefly develop and illustrate three major Ebenezer Howard's contributions:

- The first one envisions a revolutionary place for his time on food in Cities
- The second is an original City Region concept, called Social City, quite in opposition with the growth that Cities such as London or Liverpool were going through in the late nineteenth century
- And the third, is that food production, transformation and distribution could be a key urban economy driver, a quite original and quite counter intuitive concept for planners and economists that were used to consider industry as the main economic engine for city development.



Figure 1. Portrait of Ebenezer Howard

### Box 1. Garden Cities Movement

A movement started by British thinker Ebenezer Howard in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century and developed in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. It was focused on land value capture for planned communities. It looked at bringing the best features of town and country life together, of which food production and planning was a key part. The first Garden City was begun as Letchworth Garden City (LGC) in 1903 and would inspire settlements across the world – see appendix for a limited list of Garden Cities and Garden neighbourhoods -. Many of them tended to focus more on shape and form than on the original social values and **land-value captures** principles that had inspired Howard.

The Garden City movement spread over the English Channel very quickly and inspired “*Cités Jardins*” in the Coal Mining Region of Northern France, in as early as 1905, and around Brussels, just after the First World War. They are found also found around Paris, as well as in Germany, Switzerland, Portugal or The Netherlands. There are also a number around Moscow, as Howard’s book was translated into Russian as early as 1912 into Russian and inspired planners before and after the 1917 Bolsheviks revolution.

Garden Cities and Garden neighbourhoods expanded beyond the European borders and can be found in cities from the Global South such as Cairo, Buenos Aires in Argentina or Santiago in Chile to name a few. Brazil deserves a special mention as Barry Parker, one of the planners of Letchworth advised for a couple of years the City of São Paulo in Brazil for the **Jardim America** Development between 1917 and 1919. This was the starting point for a significant number of Garden neighbourhoods and Garden cities in various parts of the country [more than 45 according to current sources]. The concept of Garden cities influenced planning in North Africa as well, and the Greenbelt towns that started in the mid 30s such as Greendale in Wisconsin are probably among the most iconic examples. This worldwide movement, despite its swift expansion became in disarray with the emergence of the modernist movement and the Athens Charter signed in the mid thirties. What still remains today of this heritage and what can we learn from them to address food challenges in the 21<sup>st</sup> century?

### 2.1.1 – Pioneering Urban Agriculture and food in cities

The reason why garden cities are relevant to the urban agriculture and food agenda is that it is Howard's concept were pioneering in this area. He recognised both the value and need for agriculture and food in the city at multiple levels. The early Garden City movement saw a formal need for agriculture land in the city as an asset, it didn't view it as a 'left over land' activity. Also that it addressed social issues such as integration and also helped to alleviate poverty.

It is important to consider what Britain was like at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. The country had industrialised, but new homes had tended to follow the pattern of back-to-back housing. These were terraced homes with concrete yards at the rear (usually where the outside privy was located) which didn't provide the means for people to grow their own food. Howard recognised the importance of not just a city that could grow food, but the importance of empowering people to be able to grow food at small scales as well as a larger one.

In practice this would mean land by homes for growing food, whether as gardens or allotments. He also looked at "*socialised food-related features*" included some of the houses having "common gardens and co-operative kitchens" (Howard, 1946:54) and the improvement of land not in use for building, where fruit trees could be planted, or a dairy set up (Miller, in Parsons and Schuyler, 2002:106).

He also envisioned allotment areas in a park like settings and a productive agricultural periphery. Susan Parham of the University of Hertfordshire notes "*Howard was particularly concerned with the possibilities for agricultural production in close vicinity of such settlements*". Howard saw these as being of benefit to the farmer in producing a local food market and to inhabitants in lowering food costs. As far as Letchworth was concerned, a strategic decision was to ring the town with what we now call a 'green belt'. This was a ring of agricultural land around the town.

In short, Ebenezer Howard wanted people to live in a town that was self-sufficient in food that would recycle its food waste into green manure and be part of a network of towns that would provide markets for such food.

The delivery mechanism was in three parts,

- The community ownership of land that underpinned the entire city and made it economically viable,
- The green belt made of up cultivated and uncultivated farm land and
- The provision of allotments in the town.

For land ownership Howard discussed the doctrine that '*all men are equally entitled to use the earth*' [ibid, p76]. This clearly influenced his thought as it linked too with a radical English tradition from the Diggers' Movement around 1649 who resisted the enclosure of the Commons.

### **2.1.2 – Typology proposed by Howard in his diagram that are food and agriculture related**

Howard's idealised Garden City would house 32,000 people on an estate of 6,000 acres (2,400 ha), planned on a concentric pattern with open spaces, public parks and six radial boulevards, 120 feet (37m) wide, extending from the centre. The aim was that when the Garden City would be self-sufficient (when it reached full population), then another Garden City would be developed nearby. The Garden City Diagram [See picture 2] included in the original manifesto already gives a comprehensive account of the variety of spaces (11 in total) that should be a part of each of the garden cities. Further on, we'll examine what remained in the various plans made from this diagram, and what remains today and what has been expanded. The diagram is important historically, because it is pioneering the use of urban space for agriculture. As noted green space and agricultural land wasn't land that had yet to be built on but was an integral part of the design of the Garden City.

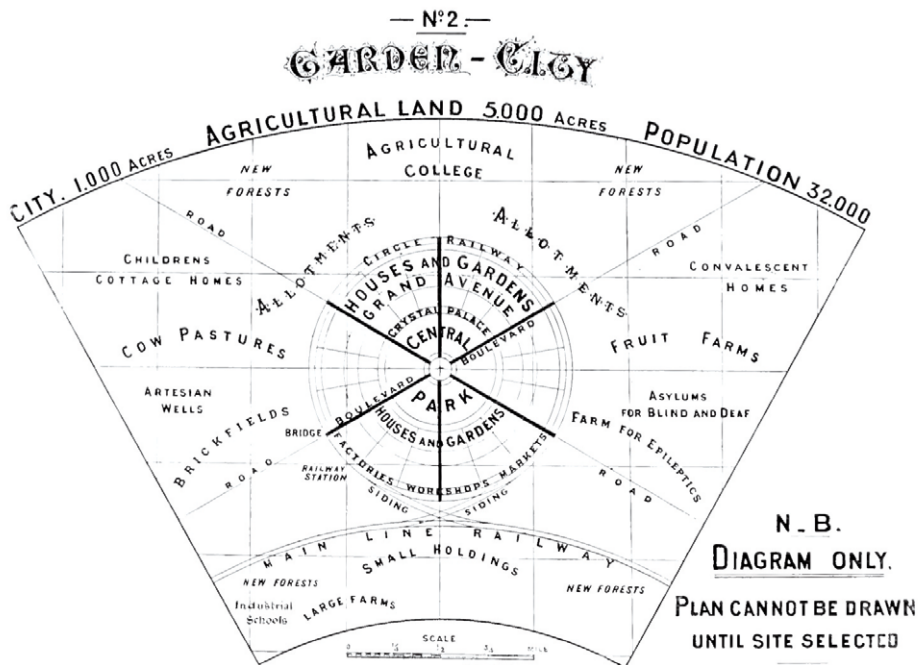


Figure 2. Garden City Diagram

The external portions of the diagram mention various **new forests** [1], **cow pastures** [2], various **large farms** [3], **fruit farms** [4] and a **sewage farm** [5] that can be understood as a farm that would recycle and make benefit of the sewerage produced by the city. All these spaces are part of the external ring, or green belt around the city. Interestingly some of these farms were for socially excluded groups such as a “**farm for epileptics**” [6] giving a hint of how the country and farming could provide solutions to health problems. The inclusion of an “**agricultural college**” [7] transmits the idea of agriculture in cities as a vivid laboratory of modern and intensive agriculture, practiced in the large and fruit farms.

Another set of productive spaces are more related to home, and of a more “urban nature”: **smallholdings** [8] for single family farming and tree planting [see picture 22], various **allotments** [9] and finally **gardens** [10] directly linked to houses. **Children Cottage homes** [11] complement the catalogue and mirror Howard’s social concern with abandoned children and the virtue than farming could bring to such a destitute groups.



### 2.1.3 – An early/original City Region concept

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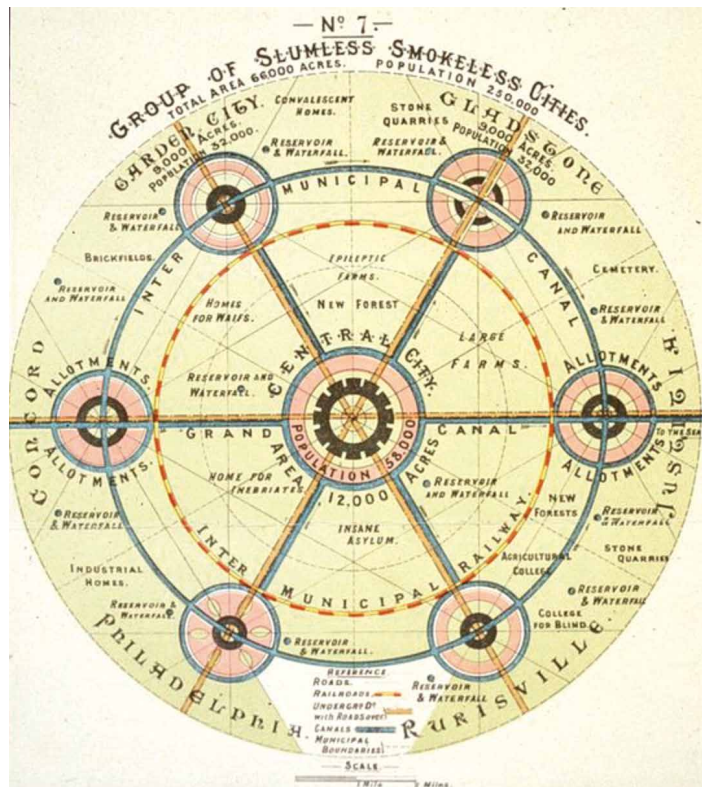


Figure 3. City Region Garden city concept [round shape]: The Social City

Howard's vision fits into a **city region concept** [see box below for definition], which he called the **Social City**. Howard's perspective when he envisioned Letchworth, was not of a single Garden City but a regional cluster of a collection of similar settlements each of a population of about 32,000 and all linked together through public transport, trains and water canals, combining to create a social city of about 250,000. These links would enable the movement of goods and people and importantly agricultural produce. Such a model was revolutionary for its time, and opposite to the linear city proposals or the "oil stain" natural expansion of a city such as London. Self-sufficiency for settlements would be through industrial zones and farmland that would ring each city. These would act like a belt which would link the growth of the settlements; provide green space and income as well the capacity for food production. These principles are schematically represented in his Garden City Diagram [see figure 3].

### **Box 2. Definition of City Region Food Systems**

*The concept of City Region critically examined at the light of Howard's vision on Garden Cities remits to a contemporary definition that includes Food Systems as coined by RUAF Foundation, Resource Centres on Urban Agriculture and Food Systems, and the Food for the Cities Initiative of the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization. According to them "City region food systems (CRFS) encompass the complex network of actors, processes and relationships to do with food production, processing, marketing, and consumption on that exist in a given geographical region that includes a more or less concentrated urban centre and its surrounding peri-urban and rural hinterland; a regional landscape across which flows of people, goods and ecosystems services are managed" [FAO-RUAF 2015].*

*When he made his original proposals over 100 years ago the population of the UK was about 40 million, now it numbers around 60 million. The first Garden City was Letchworth, founded in 1903 in Hertfordshire. Another followed in the 1920s nearby as Welwyn Garden City. The Social City wasn't fully achieved but new towns did fill the surrounding Hertfordshire countryside inspired by some of the Garden City proponents such as Stevenage, Hemel Hempstead, Milton Keynes and Hatfield. However, what was particularly of interest with Letchworth was that it didn't separate out food and the people who consumed it. The growing of food, through the provision of land that could be cultivated either in the form of allotments, large gardens, intermediate holdings as well as larger farms located in the ring of agricultural land were key Social City principles.*

### **Box 3. A 21<sup>st</sup> century vision for Garden Cities and food**

*In our book 21st Century Garden Cities of To-morrow [Cabannes & Ross: 2015] this is also reflected in its fourth key principle. Garden Cities provide access to land for living and working to all: The Garden City promotes urban agriculture, the ability for citizens to grow their own food even in an urban area. There is a right of free and fair access to the land for all residents to grow their own food whether it through common allotments, common land, farms, productive streets and parks or private gardens. Alongside this is the right for affordable housing and also the right of access to resources in urban areas to build or run their individual or collective businesses or workshops. It is a productive city that aims at its own self-sufficient providing opportunities for agricultural work, crafts, commerce and industry. Rents are provided to encourage self-sufficiency and regeneration, provided in partnership with tenants not just for tenants. The goal is for the City to be productive and sustainable in its own right not as a dormitory settlement.*

#### **2.1.4 – Why food production was seen as a key urban economy and social driver?**

Environmental, social, economic and political concerns were the backbone of Howard's thinking that led to the foundation of Letchworth Garden City in 1903. The city not only included the first "Green Belt" but land was seen as a productive asset in which the farmer would certainly benefit from the market generated by the proximity of the town.

As far as larger scale farming was concerned, Howard saw the new settlement, and later the network composing the Social City, as providing a market for agricultural produce. Though, Howard's vision was limited to providing the means for food production, he describes portions of the Garden City estate being held by "various individuals in large farms, small holdings, allotments, cow pastures etc.". Howard noted "it is easily conceivable that it may prove advantageous to grow wheat in very large fields while cultivation of vegetables, fruits, and flowers can be grown by individuals".

### 2.1.5 – Rent-Rate Concept – Economics of food link with town ownership model

Letchworth is the first example of the integration of Urban Agriculture (UA) into town planning under social, political and economic premises. It was underpinned by an economic model that Ebenezer Howard called ‘rent-rate’. It was partly derived from Thomas Spence’s Land Plan as introduced in 1775. The basic premise being that income generated from the land would be captured by the community. He felt that it would be economically competitive because:

*“The rate-rent that which will be readily paid by farmer, small occupier, and allotment holder, would be considerably greater than the rent he paid before:*

- (1) because of the presence of a new town population demanding new and more profitable farm products, in respect of which railway charges can be largely saved;*
- (2) by the due return to the soil of its natural elements;*
- (3) by the just, equitable, and natural conditions on which the land is held and*
- (4) by reason of the fact that the rent now paid is rate and rent, while the rent formerly paid left the rates to be paid by the tenant.”* (Howard, E 1902: 64)

The rate-rent concept outlines Howard’s vision of not only urban planning, but also of community management in which it produces the revenue used to provide public services such as schools, hospitals, and communications.

#### **Box 4. Rent Rate concept**

Central to Howard’s argument was that the Garden City could operate economically and allow the community to have ownership of the land. Howard goes to great lengths to demonstrate how the revenue derived simply from rents could be used to:

- Pay the interest with which the estate was purchased (providing a 4% return for the initial investors)
- Provide a sinking fund for the purpose of paying off the principal
- Construct and maintain all the works typically undertaken by municipalities (including a detailed breakdown of associated costs)
- Provide a large surplus for other purposes including old age pensions, medical services and insurance

### 2.1.6 – Food processing in Garden Cities

Today, while food production for self-consumption, business or leisure remains traceable through texts, plans, testimonies and pictures, much less exists on the processing of the locally produced food.

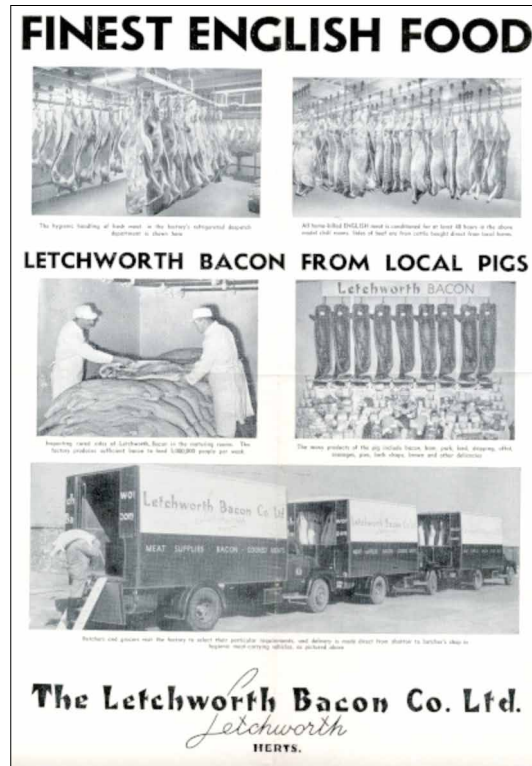


Figure 4. Letchworth Bacon Company Poster from 1957

One example is The Letchworth Bacon Co. Ltd [see picture 4], which proudly claims to be producing “finest English food” and marketed “Letchworth Bacon from Local Pigs”. The company employed about 80 staff members in the 1950’s that processed locally grown pigs into a large range of different products, such as bacon, ham, sausages, meat pie and distributed them through its truck fleet. This integrated company clearly illustrates the economic dimension of food in Garden cities and the prevalence of “locally produced food” in a perspective of self-sufficiency, as idealised by Howard [pictures from Garden City Collection archives, consulted in 2017]. This industry was located within the large Industrial Estate and highlights that industry and agriculture

were at the core of the Garden City concept.

The above example even if limited is not isolated and all through its over 100 years of existence processing of local produce can be found in Letchworth. One of the last cases, that will be referred to at a later stage being beer made from local apple species.

### **2.1.7 – Marketing food in Garden Cities**

As for markets for such produce, none were specifically created as Howard noted *“yet farmers and others are not by any means limited to the town as their only market but have the fullest right to dispose of their produce to whomever they please”* [p26].

Interestingly Letchworth suffered from being a new town and the existing town of Hitchin was anxious about the impact Letchworth would have on its own prosperity. As a result Letchworth never received a formal Charter to hold a permanent market in the town. Even If Howard hadn't defined a specific market for the food produced locally, he envisioned the settlement itself as *the* market and commented, *“in other words the combination of town and country is not only healthy, but economic”*.

He stated *“consider vegetables and fruits, farmers, except near towns, do not often grow them now. Why? Chiefly because of the difficulty and uncertainty of a market, and the high charges for freights and commission.”* [p12].

Just as with his general crusade against absent landlords, the goal was to help farmers escape the “spider’s web” of middlemen and speculators. Susan Parham, from University of Hertfordshire notes that *“the green belts proposed by Howard were not just a landscape setting for his Garden Cities but a highly productive agricultural component of the economic base underlying these settlements, and it is notable that Howard saw urban food waste and human waste going back into the countryside round these settlements to enrich the soil”*.

Our understanding is that it was linked with “fair rents” and fair tenures. Howard believed that the Garden City could use market forces by “converting competition from an active into a latent force to be brought into play or held in reserve”. Howard explained that this was possible because the Garden City was the sole landlord. The accomplishment of a successful market for food was linked with the tenure of the land – that it was held commonly and used for the common good. He saw tradesmen and businesses as ‘municipal servants’ and that the Garden City model could help to minimise their risks. [p54].



These were the objectives of the Garden City, and he was at pains to explain the logic of such an approach, though we haven't seen any great plan to implement such solutions in Letchworth in terms of specific marketplace or businesses. A 'free-marketeer' would say that Howard was doing right thing in creating the conditions for growth and business rather than in trying to control and generate it directly, others could say he left it to chance. In the next sections we shall explore how Howards' ideals were transformed by planners and adapted to a unique social economy model that gave to the city its current physical /spatial shape

## 2.2 The planners' contribution: Robert Unwin and Barry Parker

The principal urban planners for Letchworth, Barry Parker [1867 – 1947] and Robert Unwin [1863 – 1940], both turned Howard's philosophical principles and ideals into a development plan. The original Master Plan, designed late 1903, and approved and adopted in February 1904, focused on the "city" side of the Garden City and gave its shape to its centre. It covers only a portion of today's Letchworth City. Only some food related spaces, such as gardens, allotments and smallholdings, were designed in the plan and those close to the cricket fields can still be identified.

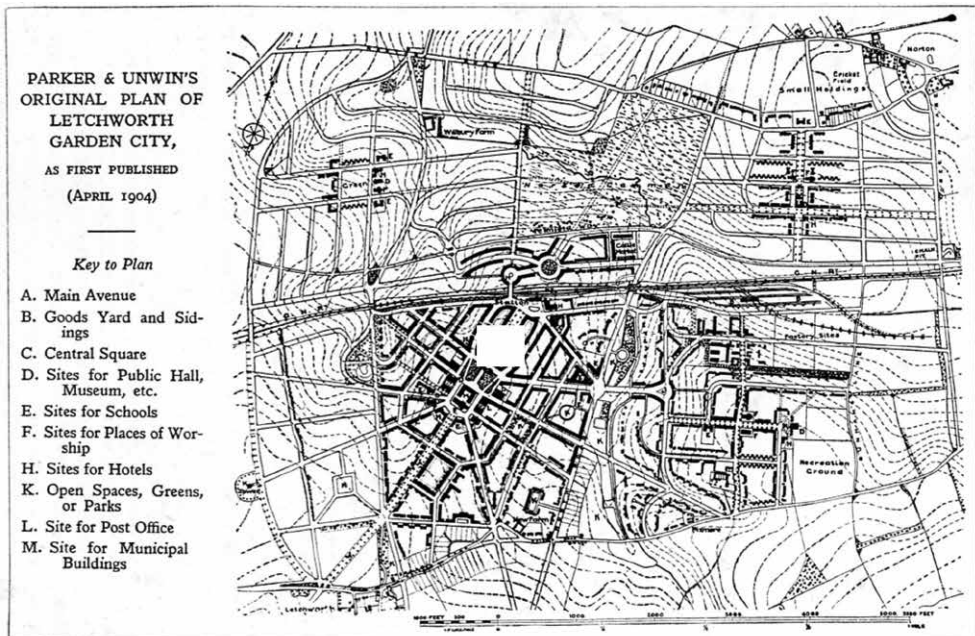


Figure 5. Letchworth. Original Plan as first published in 1905. Source: LGCHF, Letchworth Garden City Heritage Foundation





However, analysis of the detailed subsequent plans later developed by Letchworth Estate Office, give extraordinary details about the integration of food related spaces. They reveal how food spaces were consolidated into neighbourhoods and how they were creatively developed through time. They also illustrated good examples of how to include food into urban planning at city-region levels. Out of the series of plans developed by the Estate Office of First Garden City Ltd [1918, 1925, 1929, 1931, 1936, 1946 and 1952], the 1925 master plan of the town area remains interesting as it ends up the most creative planning period of the Garden City movement, while Ebenezer Howard was still alive.

Comparing with the plan elements mentioned in Howard's diagram [picture 6] the 1925 plan shows the inclusion of the **large farms** [Norton Grange Farm, Standalone Farm and Manor Farm] and the **fruit farm** called for by Howard.

A **poultry farm**, not indicated in the diagram, became a reality. The agricultural college became a **Seed warehouse and trial grounds**, still highlighting the willingness of the Garden City to carry out experiments to modernise agriculture and adapt it to the urban environment.

A **nursery** indicates the importance of tree planting. However, no references are made to the **new forests, cow pastures, and the farm for epileptics** indicated in the original diagram (6).

In relation to the home-related productive spaces: many existing and **new allotments** are elements in the 1925 plan, and the **smallholdings** referred to in the original 1903 plan have expanded and are organised in two large areas. These are family based. front yard and backyard gardens corresponding to the original gardens mentioned in Howard's diagram.

Also missing in the 1925 plan are the **Children Cottage homes**.

The later plans display elements of both Howard's philosophic vision and conventional planning practices. For example, the biggest civic society to be established in the new Garden City was the Horticultural Society. Parker, Unwin and Howard were all members, clearly indicating their closeness to community led development.

In addition, many new colonists to The Garden City were keen to get closer to nature and to become self-sufficient, undoubtedly strongly influencing the later development and planning of the fledgling town. At the same time the early designs included large parks and planted avenues, representatives of the beautiful city planning principles of that day. In this sense, one could say that Garden City, as designed by planners, was not only about food, but also about a delicate balance between food, beauty and urban values that were dominant at that time.

## 3. 110+ years on – Legacy of food planning in Letchworth Garden City

### 3.1 What remains of the original principles and plans?



*Figure 7. Aerial View of LGC in 2017*

Letchworth in 2017: The aerial view of LGC taken in 2017 [see picture 7] provides a clear proof that the original plans as designed by Unwin and Parker have been largely implemented, respecting both the original ideals and their planning materialisation. This is important to underline as most of the new towns that were built in the UK, and various of them contain garden cities elements, have been profoundly modified to the point that it is difficult to still find original features. In global terms, the overall Letchworth Garden City estate is 5,500 acres (2,225 hectares), with 3,000 acres (1214 hectares) of these classified as rural. A total of 2241 acres (906 hectares) are commercially farmed. The 13.6 miles long Greenway, a circular walk around the whole border of the town, was built and is popular with cyclists, runners, and walkers. In



summary, 55 % of the Estate is still rural, against 64 % in 1925 and 83 % in the original manifesto. This large proportion of rural land still is unique compared to other New Towns.

The balance between food and beauty as introduced in all the master plans up to the 1930's is still perfectly perceived once you stroll LGC [see Pictures 8 and 9]. Generous spaces, and perspectives of large alleys, a beautiful Commons and many parks give the city a unique feature and go hand in hand with food related spaces that will be briefly detailed hereafter.



*Figure 8. Aerial view of LGC today [Central part]*



Figure 9. Norton Commons. Letchworth Garden city was planned for beauty not only food

### 3.2 Evolution from Howard's vision and the plans of Parker and Unwin

#### 3.2.1 – Green belt...for the first time!

Howard intended to produce *“planned, self-contained, communities surrounded by greenbelts, containing carefully balanced areas of residences, industry, and agriculture”*. The green belts that would ring a Garden City would be given over to food production and provide breathing space between the settlements. But for Howard (1902: 9), the greenbelt around the Garden City was also to ensure its bounded quality and to stop the town having unlimited growth. Modern scholars see other functions that the green belt performed. Susan Parham notes, *“of immense practical use in maintaining a productive spatial, environmental and economic relationship with the town it served”*. [2]

Although Howard didn't expressly consider it to be a green belt in modern parlance, the advantages of it caught on. In the 1930s there were campaigns for a clear barrier of undeveloped land against ribbon development and urban sprawl. Because of these campaigns and other local initiatives, the first Green Belts were designated in London and Sheffield, the former assisted by an Act of Parliament in 1938. By 1955, Green Belts were firmly supported by both national planning legislation and policy.

### 3.2.2 – Farming Land and agricultural estate [Manor Farm]



*Figure 10. Agricultural estate. Source: LGCHF, Letchworth Garden City Heritage Foundation*

The farmland had been operated directly by Letchworth Garden City Farms, a subsidiary of the LGC Heritage Foundation that manages the Garden City like a Community Land Trust (see Section 5). In 2008, the farm produced revenue of £1.4 million, but quite a limited profit. As a result, in 2011 the Foundation outsourced the operation of the farms to a sole local company, Rand Brothers. Currently this firm mainly grows wheat [see picture 10], and *ahi* flower for Omega 3 production, sugar beet and rapeseed. In addition to cultivation, there is a small herd of rare breed of Aberdeen Angus.

The rent for the agricultural land generates an income for the Heritage Foundation of around £300,000 a year (Heritage Foundation, 2015). The town council of Letchworth in the early 2000s operated on a similar budget to the farm revenue though this was raised through taxation. Indeed, that budget is comparable with that of other small Parishes or Town Councils. This shows that endowing a town with agricultural land can encourage food production and raise revenue for the town to spend. Another income benefit of the leasing arrangements is the encouragement of good farming practices. Today 2500 acres (1012 hectares) of farmland are in the Natural England



Higher Level Scheme (HLS) and the lease specifies that this is maintained according to the highest standards of soil conservation.

Howard had envisaged food waste being used for farming and today Letchworth's residential food waste is used to fertilise the farmland. Within a few weeks of waste being thrown out it's helping to grow crops on the farm. By restricting the use of harmful chemicals, the waste recycling also ensures that the farmland is a clean and safe environment for Letchworth residents to enjoy<sup>1</sup>.

### 3.2.3 – Standalone farm



Figure 11. Standalone educational farm. Source: LGCHF, Letchworth Garden City Heritage Foundation

In addition to food production, some of the farmland provides educational benefits. Standalone farm set in 125 acres (50.6 hectares) was mentioned in the 1925 master plan as an operating farm. Today it still functions as a working farm with an emphasis on child educational and social activities. It is popular beyond the borders of Letchworth, with children from more urban backgrounds coming to visit. Their familiarity with the animals and idea of farming rose hugely in comparison with others from a more urban background in London. It is managed directly by the Heritage Foundation and subsidised thanks to the benefits made through the benefits of the Community Land Trust (See Section 5 for definition of a CLT) [See picture 11]

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.leetchworth.com/heritage-foundation/about-us/funding-our-work/our-farming-operations>

### 3.2.4 – Wildflowers meadows

Through their agreements with Natural England, wild flower meadows are maintained on areas adjacent to the Greenway to encourage butterflies and bees. They are part of the Entry Level and Higher Level Schemes, which means that they have signed up to various restrictions, including larger than usual margins and certain type of planting schemes. Because of the stewardship models and the Greenway, the Foundation received one of the larger grants from Natural England as part of a 10 years programme starting in 2008. Letchworth's experience demonstrates that its urban food production areas are compatible with the highest levels of environmental protection. In more general terms, it suggests that Community-Private Partnerships can bring benefits in social and economic terms, but also, just as importantly, in environmental terms.

### 3.2.5 – Community and commercial orchard



Figure 12. New Community Orchard

The development of a fruit farm was one of Howard's concepts and it was included as an element in the original plans. But it was only realized in 2010, when 450 apple trees were planted.

*"To create a community Orchard and the first new commercial Orchard in Hertfordshire for decades. Since the 1950's, more than 60 % of Orchards in England have vanished – largely down to housing or industrial developments taking over" <sup>2</sup>. As with the wildflower's meadows, special care was given from the outset to grow local species and to insure stewardship of the land, with a strong community component: This was consistent with Howard's original view where "The Orchard will be divided into two areas: the smaller Community Orchard will consist of traditional local Hertfordshire varieties of apple, pear, plum and gage, with the community able to pick the fruit for themselves. The larger Commercial Orchard will be planted with apple varieties suitable for producing apple juice and cider on a commercial basis" [ibid].*

Today, according to David Ames<sup>3</sup> from LGC Heritage Foundation, "residents are free to come and collect apples at no cost, but interestingly it has taken a few years for residents to believe that they really can collect up the apples and for word to spread" [see picture 12].

### 3.2.6 – Allotments

Allotments are small land holdings, granted to residents to grow vegetable gardens [See pictures 13 and 14]. In 1924 the Horticultural Society reported that there were "320 allotment holders: 250 from Garden City limited and from different other institutions including 4 factories". Today there are approximately 270 allotments, of which 70 are controlled by the Heritage Foundation and the remainders by the local council. In addition, a local housing association at Howard Cottage has established and cultivates some plots. Though the population is about twice as big now, given the demographic and lifestyle changes of the last 80 years, this is still a high comparative number.

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.greenway.org.uk/news/around-450-trees-be-planted-new-orchard> consulted in March 201

<sup>3</sup> Ames, D, communication with authors, May 2017





*Figure 13. Leisure allotments with elderly. Source: Yves Cabannes*





*Figure 14. Allotments and farmed green belt at the rear. Source: Yves Cabannes*

**Plots in 2017:** Even if the number of plots has slightly decreased through time, new ones have been recently created similar to the recent development of the orchard. Of note “... an allotment site at Cade Close was developed for Hartington Place approximately 10 years ago and more importantly housing layouts included allotments in the village green layouts to the front of properties [See picture 15].

There are some examples remaining at Common View, which is typical of this type of arrangement, but sadly residents there are less keen to use these areas for vegetables and they often become ornamental gardens”<sup>4</sup>.

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<sup>4</sup> Mail from D. Ames, LGC Heritage Foundation, May 2017



*Figure 15. New Allotments close to recently built eco-housing. LGC. Source: Yves Cabannes*

### **3.2.7 – Individual front yard and backyard gardens**

Today in Britain, when people talk of a ‘front yard’ or a ‘backyard’ they usually mean areas of hard standing – i.e. concrete or tarmac. Many of the older homes in Letchworth have long gardens or green areas in the front or back of the houses. These cultivated areas were the result of the Temperance Movement, which was strong in Letchworth, so much so that alcohol was not sold for nearly 60 years. Belief was that if people had large gardens they could grow food and wouldn’t be drinking at the pub. Today the Letchworth requirement is that all front gardens must be at least 1/3 green (i.e. not paved car parking areas) much to the annoyance of many residents. The growth in car ownership with people wanting to park on their property and not on the street has put pressure on this policy.

(The Temperance movement was and is a social movement against the consumption of alcoholic beverages, which was prevalent in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. It campaigned to have public houses closed and beer watered down and for taxes to be levied on alcohol).

### 3.2.8 – Small Holdings

As in some other European garden cities inspired neighbourhoods, these holdings, much larger than allotments plots allowed for family-based farming around their homes or places to grow fruit as seen in picture 16. While they were integral part of the original typology of food related spaces, and quite significantly expressed in the early plans, in many places they have largely disappeared. One European inspired Garden City was in the Statins of Ile de France. Adalgisa Rubino when writing about the allotment gardens of Ile de France, makes the observation that:

*“The urban allotments in the Ile de France also show another interesting peculiarity: that of being treated as bona fide public spaces concurring in the redefinition of the image of the contemporary city; places that involve agriculture and leisure time, establishing relations between citizens and urban and rural spaces”.*



Figure 16. Archive picture of small holdings



### 3.3 Letchworth's 100+ year legacy on the City Region Concept

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*Figure 17. Letchworth Broadway in 2017. Source: Yves Cabannes*

In summary, the Letchworth story maintains an alternative way to look at City Region Food Systems, even if not all the legacy has been maintained. It is clear that Letchworth pioneered the formal involvement of food production systems in the planning process. The legacy of the back-to-back housing [see box below] in the UK with its squalor and disease and its disempowerment of people provided the backdrop for the Garden City movement. Instead of high density, low amenity communities, the garden city idea was in part to give people some land with soil that could empower them to grow their own food.

What remains remarkable in Letchworth, and needs to be understood by food planners, is the permanent re-invention and adaptation capacity of the actors in the city to generate innovative approaches, without going too much astray from the original ideals of food related planning.

### **Box 5. Back-to-back houses**

*Back-to-back houses are a form of terraced house in the United Kingdom. Many thousands of these houses were built during the Industrial Revolution for the rapidly increasing population of Britain's expanding factory towns. The passage of the Public Health Act 1875 meant that no more were built; instead byelaw terraced houses took their place.*

*Usually of low quality and high density, they were built for working class people. These houses were usually small, e.g. a two-up two-down (two rooms on each of two floors) or three floors of one room each. Two houses share a rear wall, or the rear wall of a house directly abuts a factory or other building. Because three of the four walls of the house were shared with other buildings and therefore contained no doors or windows, back-to-back houses were notoriously ill lit and poorly ventilated; sanitation was of a low standard. They often had backyards, which were a small space surrounded by walls at the back of a house, usually with a hard surface. No green space for growing food.*

**Space and empowerment:** A key concept of the Garden City was about empowering people and communities. This was realized by creating space for food at residential gardens, at neighbourhood allotments, farmland that would ring the town, and at regional level where transportation systems would link settlements together to create markets.

So, of this vision what has been maintained? There are key changes from that vision of the early 20th century. Firstly, the formal Social City system wasn't implemented, though as Brian Love (2014) has shown in his book '**Connected Cities**' Hertfordshire does have an informal network of new towns, partly linked by rail. At a City level, the fact that the farmland is a part of the formal Garden City estate has meant that it has been maintained for the common good and remains in 'common' ownership, albeit via the Foundation.

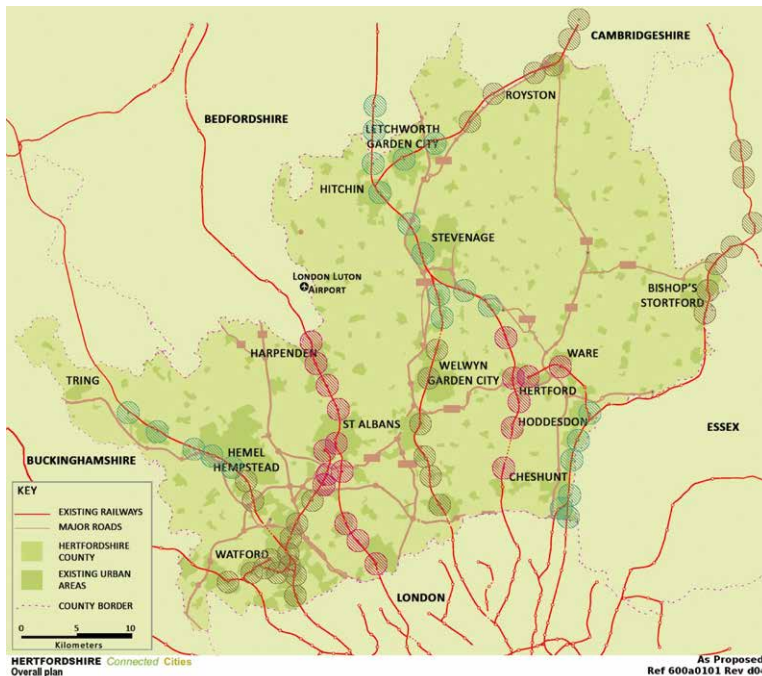


Figure 18. The nine potential connected cities Of Hertfordshire showing potential pedsheds. Those of the same colour are in the same Connected City.

The nine connected cities shown on the map [picture 18] indicate that these connected cities broadly compose a City Region and that it is far from the original radio-concentric / round shaped model as envisioned by Howard, and much closer to the concept of the linear city as idealised in 1882 for Madrid by Arturo Soria. A fundamental difference lies in the fact that in the Social City large agricultural pieces of land were cultivated between smaller self-reliant cities, whereas Soria's concept was to develop primarily urban fabric along a set of infrastructures facilities and transport systems.

### 3.4 Historical Resilience of the Garden Cities' food model

A distinguishing feature of the Letchworth master plan was low-density housing. Homes were built at densities of between four an acre [16 per hectare] for detached homes, to 12 an acre [48/ha] for terraced cottages. All houses were to have gardens large enough to keep a family in fresh vegetables - a stipulation which was to prove effective during the years of the First World War and those of "dig for victory" during the Second World War.

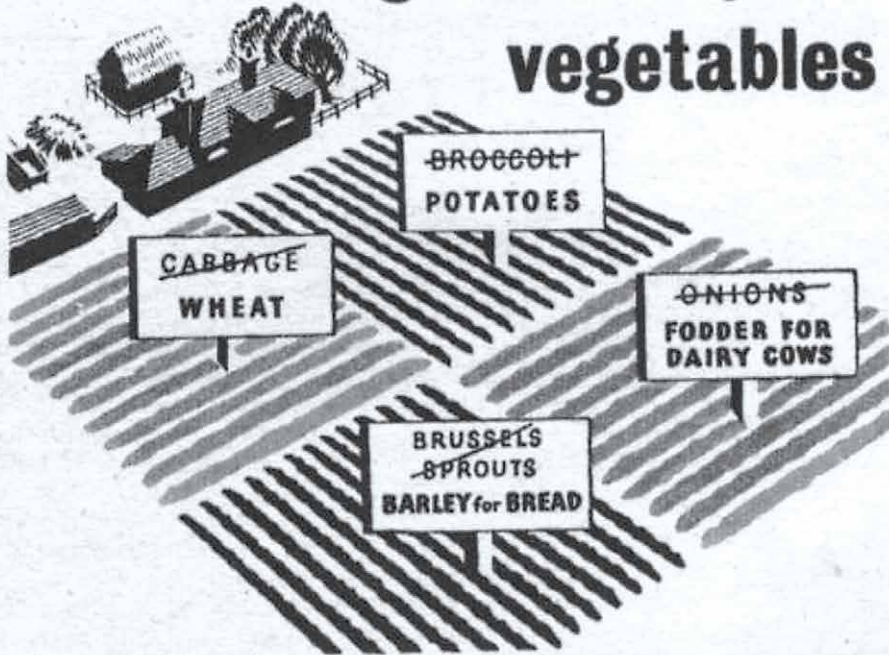
### **Box 6. Garden Cities and food in times of wars**

**World War 1:** *When the Letchworth Horticultural Society annual food show, was organized in 1914, on the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the city, Ebenezer Howard invited the residents to take seriously food production: “Dear Brothers and sisters. The war has already raised the price of food, and prices may yet further advance – even after the war comes to an end, and may be yet a long, long way off” Johnson, K, compiler (1988), Such an invitation clearly indicates the importance he was giving to the productive dimension of a Garden City, quite far indeed, from the aristocratic notion of idle parks and gardens such as Regent Park or Hyde Park that had been flourishing in London.*

*Interestingly the First World War kicked up the number of allotments holders, that continue increasing once the war was over. The 90 wartime gardens increased to 320 in 1924, of which various were within factories premises. In 1930, the Allotment holders and cottage gardener’s protection association was “probably the most flourishing Society in Letchworth” and counted 230 members [ibid].*

**Dig for Victory campaign in World War 2:** *In 1938 Britain imported some 55million tons of food. The outbreak of war meant that importation of food stopped almost overnight and the nation had to cultivate its own land. This meant that every available space was put in use. A new frontline of this campaign was launched under the name of Dig For Victory. Beans became a regular part of the everyday diet, carrots replaced sweets and onions briefly became worth their ‘weight in gold’. The result was that formal gardens lawns and even sports pitches were turned into gardens so that vegetables could be grown. People were also encouraged to keep animals. Even recipes were provided on how the best use could be made of vegetables fruit, eggs and meat. In Picture 19 a poster is shown directed to women, which highlights their role as food producers and contributors to the war efforts. The poster indicates, as well the complements, of urban agriculture [onions, Brussels sprouts, broccoli, cabbages in the poster] and rural agriculture [wheat, barley for bread, potatoes, fodder for dairy cows] within a City Region Food Planning system. Dig for Victory was very successful exceeding all expectations. Between 1939 and 1945 imports of food were halved and the increase of British land use for food production increased by 80 %.*

# WOMEN! Farmers can't grow all your vegetables



**You must grow your own.** Farmers are growing more of the other essential crops—potatoes, corn for your bread, and food for the cows. It's up to *you* to provide the vegetables that are vital to your children's health—especially in winter. Grow all you can. If you don't, they may go short. Turn your garden over to vegetables. Get the older children to help you. If you haven't a garden ask your local council for an allotment. **DO IT NOW.**

# DIG *for Victory*

Figure 19. Poster Dig for Victory Campaign



We have already noted how Letchworth positively reacted to the strong directions given by E. Howard himself at the break of First World War. The receptivity of the Horticulture Society was a stimulus to produce and diversify food production. This was made possible because also of the planning model that allowed for food production and food transformation. Such a conclusion is even stronger when analysing how Letchworth reacted to the *Dig for Victory* Campaign. Its impact in Letchworth was quite high: about 120 new wartime allotments were added in 1941 to the existing ones summing up 798 in total, a significant number for a city still under construction. The mobilisation was not only coming from the Allotment Society, others contributed. For example, the Tennis Club planted one court with potatoes, and new clubs emerged for poultry and rabbits rising [ibid, chapter 19]. Even if women were one of the main targets of the campaign, youngsters were mobilised as well, as picture 19 suggests. In the post-war years, which were marked by poverty and reconstruction this self-sufficiency movement kept its impetuosity. As proof, between 1945 and 1949, the request for plots continued [ibid, chapter 20]



Figure 20. Letchworth schoolboys growing food



UK has not experienced similar times of crises since then, but the importance of city and household resilience is still very valid.

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Forced displacement driven by protracted conflicts is having a profound impact on urban infrastructure and the management of natural resources in and around cities and towns, affecting both refugees and host communities. Most cities are ill equipped to host a high number of refugees and migrants. The arrival of large numbers of refugees to urban areas quickly exceeds the capacity of local urban authorities to effectively manage their integration, and pressure on services and local resources soon mounts, creating numerous tensions. This calls for innovative strategies and systems that deal with processes of change at various scales, involving different sectors and all stakeholders, in the planning of settlements, whether part of a city or of a “temporary” settlement.

Urban and peri-urban agriculture (UPA) in its various forms can play an important role in the disaster management cycle: in the integrated design and management of refugee camps as well as in creating resilience in urban areas (Adam-Bradford and Van Veenhuizen, 2015). Regional food systems that incorporate this humanitarian context could increase the resilience of urban food systems. Gardens can provide food and income but also a sense of beauty, home, and hope in a challenging situation. In an integrated approach, urban food systems can link to other potential benefits such as building innovations in water and energy use, improved production, processing and marketing, employment generation, waste management, social inclusion and building capacities in coping strategies.

## 4. Three lessons to learn from the Garden City model

### 4.1 Consider land as a collective asset: Community land trust

What makes this city unique is not only the plan and the planning process, but more importantly its land property regime. Most of the Letchworth land (excluding residential areas that were privatised in the 60s) is still owned by the **Letchworth Garden City [LGC] Heritage Foundation** that operates like a community land trust.

The organisation is the successor to the original company that owned Letchworth. Ebenezer Howard's original plan was for residents to hold shares in the company and this did happen, but when a property company tried to buy up all the shares and effectively demutualise the town, the town was nationalised by Parliament as the Letchworth Garden City Corporation.

The new Foundation established in 1995 is the successor to that. Therefore, any farmer, allotment holder or Business Company active in the industrial estate are leaseholders and pay a lease to the Heritage Foundation.

A community land trust is an ownership model that effectively separates out land from property so that there are separate deeds for each. The “community” aspect is that land is owned and controlled for and by the local community and they work to capture any uplift in value for the good of the people who live and work there. It is about both community ownership and governance. There is a definition of a CLT in British law. Letchworth pre-dates the term of ‘community land trust’, though the concept fits. In the USA community land trusts are growing in popularity with Champlain Housing Trust in Burlington, Vermont as a key example. They work particularly well where there is likely to be an uplift in land values as a result of the development of a community. Having a CLT that owns the land means that this uplift in value is captured by the community not by absent third parties.

### **Box 7. What is a Community Land Trust?**

*A community land trust (CLT) is a not-for-profit community-controlled organization that owns, develops and manages local assets for the benefit of the local community. Its objective is to acquire land and property and hold it in trust for the benefit of a defined locality or community in perpetuity.*

*A CLT separates the value of the land from the buildings that stand on it and can be used in a wide range of circumstances to preserve the value of any public and private investment, as well as planning gain and land appreciation for community benefit. Crucially, local residents and businesses are actively involved in planning and delivering affordable local housing, workspace or community facilities. CLTs use a variety of legal structures and carry out a wide range of activities to meet local needs. Typically there is a strong emphasis on local community empowerment and the democratic stewardship of the assets.*

Source: Diacon, Clarke and Guimarães (2005). Redefining the Commons, Locking in Value Through Community Land Trusts. The Building and Social Housing Foundation, Leicestershire, UK

## **4.2 Create an empowered custodian: The role of the Heritage Foundation**

The Foundation manages and holds many of the original assets of the Garden City, comprising offices, shops, factories, houses, farms, community amenities and most of the commercial, industrial, and agricultural land. Income generated from property, farming and other activities is channelled back into the Garden City in two ways: reinvest to maintain the fabric of the estate and its landscape, and funding for a wide range of charitable enterprises and endeavours in LGC.

The uniqueness of the land regime relies as well on existing structures [Heritage Foundation and its redistributive role of ground rent captured] and social movement such as the Horticulture Society, founded in the early time of the development of the city, which remains the guardian of the social, cultural and environment dimension of the Garden City.

LGC Heritage Foundation is a not-for-profit organisation structured as an Industrial and Provident Society registered with the Registrar of Friendly Societies. It has property and land assets in the town worth some £127m (\$177m) and generated an annual income of £7.6m (\$10.6m) in 2011-212 and £4.5m (\$6.28m) in 2015, from ground rents and other ventures.

The Heritage Foundation operates several subsidiaries. These Limited Companies enable the Foundation to operate a number of trading activities, which fall outside its charitable status. One of them, of direct interest to understand how the food system works, was **Letchworth Garden City Farms Ltd.**, which is responsible for farming the 2500 acres (1012 hectares) of agricultural land as well as the Foundation's Forestry and landscaping divisions.

### **Box 8. Governance structure of Letchworth Garden City Heritage Foundation**

*The Heritage Foundation is composed of an elected Chairman, a Board of Management [9 members] who works with the Chief Executive and his executive team. This group determines strategy, set policies and makes decisions on key matters. The Board of Governors sum up to 30 members: 10 are nominated, appointed by registered LGC clubs and 2 are from the Country and District Council. These two members are the bridge with the Public sector. In addition, LGC registered voters elect 6 members and finally 14 are appointed by the Board of Management for their relevant experience in areas pertinent to the Foundation. Such a power structure is different from most of the Community Land Trusts existing in the USA, in which usually one third of the members are direct beneficiaries, one third are residents that live outside the Community Land Trust but share its ideals and one third are representative of the public interest.*

The Heritage Foundation operational structure counts around 145 staff members. It is broadly divided into two major areas: Income (property rent; IT services; Farm Company, Cinema and Venues) and Charitable Activities (Grants, Day Hospital, Transport Services, Tourist Information Centre, Museum, Heritage and Landscape management). In addition, the LGC Heritage Foundation has an unofficial duty to represent the Garden City movement and while in good stewardship it has been able to lead on this agenda.

### 4.3 Give power and influence to people: Contribution and resilience of community-based allotment and Horticultural Associations

As noted in the book *21st Century Garden Cities of To-morrow* [Cabannes & Ross, 2014] access to the land provided both the ability to grow food but also helped engender a sense of citizenship through place, purpose and belonging. The provision of large gardens facilitated this by providing allotments for citizens eager to embrace the change. What inspired other new garden cities was the realisation that success of a city resulted from both its architecture and its social structures. The New Garden City movement brought a fresh focus on garden cities.

Today Letchworth and the original Garden City movement is being used to inspiration for layout, design, governance and use of sustainable materials in both the short and longer term.

Success in Letchworth is also attributable to the formal structure of the Heritage Foundation and to those multiple voluntary institutions created by local citizens. Of specially note is the *Horticultural Society*, now called the Letchworth District Gardeners Association.

Different local clubs and societies have contributed as well to shaping food related spaces and change land use. Each of these organizations brings a different edge to the food system including such diverse agendas as Youth movement against animal pains, as illustrated in picture 19; Haven Social Club for rural women workers during Second World War or Transition Town Letchworth involved in the newly planted Community Orchard and Tree Planting.



Figure 21. Movement against animal pain

The recently founded *New Garden Cities Alliance* argues strongly that a Garden City is about the visible and invisible architecture. It is not to be a place based on charity and paternalism but on empowerment and active citizenship. The goal of a Garden City is to be a place that is ‘socially, ecologically and economically sustainable’ according to the Garden City Declaration which was agreed at the Letchworth Conference on ‘Building a new garden city movement’ on 22nd February 2017. A key point of discussion at that conference was on the principles associated to the land that should be hold as a common good. The following subsections contain examples of the benefits community-based food related organizations bring to the city.

#### 4.3.1 – Enhancing biodiversity in cities through food production

A remarkable dimension of the Allotments and Horticultural Association is its net contribution to food for the city: primarily vegetables, but occasionally also including such diverse item as chicken, rabbits, eggs, apples, honey, pears and other fruits and berries. As noted in a book review on the activities of the Association the following produce was either presented at the annual show, or produced for self-consumption: poultry [1911]; “sweet peas, potatoes, dandelion wine, beekeeping” [1912]; carrots and shallots, vegetables, fruit, flowers and eggs [1933-35]; ‘broad beans, beetroots, carrots, autumn onions, jam, roses, round and kidney potatoes, and cabbages’[1949-1951].



The capacity to adapt to evolving food tastes through the century and diversify the fresh food produced clearly indicates that allotment holders do contribute to increasing the *city biodiversity*, a dimension often forgotten when addressing City Region Food planning. at the opposite to the industrial farms, that usually produce a very limited number of items.

Another observation is that at the end of the Second World War, the Allotment Society, with its 900 members was proudly observing that Letchworth is “*producing more food than when the estate was farmland, 40 years ago*” [ibid, chapter 19]. Ten years later, “*Dr Norman Macfayden, the most loyal past president, pleaded with gardeners to keep records to prove that even more food was produced in a garden City than in the fields that were there fifty years before*” [ibid, chapter 22, 1952/1956 period]. Both testimonies are an important lesson for City and Regional Food planners, or for planners in general, insofar urban models, when properly planned and designed are compatible with increased self-sufficiency and increase of nutritious food for the benefit of the residents.

#### 4.3.2 – Key role of food fairs and food shows for maintaining food legacy alive



Figure 22. Archive Picture of Food fairs competitors

Allotments continue to thrive in the town and the Horticultural Society (Letchworth Gardeners' Association) is proving to be a hardy annual with over 700 members. 2017 will mark the 53rd Annual Summer Show and 111th Autumn show. This latter event features prizes for roses, dahlia's, fuchsia's, sweet peas in the flower section and traditional vegetables like onions, carrots, runner beans, cucumbers, marrows, potatoes, shallots, parsnips, sweet corn, leeks and presumably a more recent addition of chilli plants. Homemade beer, wine and chutney also feature in the show and competition [see Picture 22].

Today most gardens are used to grow food not so much for subsistence, but for recreation or leisure, and often gardeners seek to grow challenging crops too. The role of the food fairs and the shows where local people present their best flowers, fruit, vegetables or transformed products such as jams or chutneys explains much about why a culture of food was maintained and developed in the Garden City. The hundred-year review of the Association, describes them with great details and pride.

#### 4.3.3 – Supply and trading centre at city and District level



*Figure 23. Trading center for allotment holders. Source: Yves Cabannes*

<sup>1</sup> <http://ldga.org.uk/wp/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/LDGAShowSchedule2017.pdf>

As illustrated in picture 23, the Letchworth District Gardeners' Association set up and manages a trading centre for Letchworth District allotment holders.

Only Gardener's Association Members may make purchases at the store. This trading centre plays a crucial role as it buys in bulk and sells them without profit and in smaller quantities to the members. Moreover, volunteers store helpers are able to give advice on all the products available in store. The trading centre plays a convening role for allotments holders to meet, discuss and exchange know how, and avoid isolation (as the allotments are scattered over the whole city). This space close to a large allotment serves as a regular training centre, with practical classes and conferences provided by selected invitees.

This place shaped by the community facilitates connections among the network of allotments holders and allows shifting from micro-local spaces to the Garden City as a whole. It probably contributes to the Association's sustainability.

#### **4.3.4 – Sustainability of the Allotments and Horticultural Association**

The declaration made on the 90<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Association, in 1996, is quite enlightening on **why** the original ideals and land use on garden cities food planning remained present one hundred years later:

*“Rooted in the island tradition of self sufficiency and nourished by the basic elements of those human needs for food and beauty, it is an organism [L Allotments and Horticultural Association] which will survive any conditions in a foreseeable future”.*

City Region food planning depends as well on the sustainability of the resident association and on their capacity to being actively involved in food related matters, such as food production, the annual show to stimulate food production, short circuit and fairs, collective buying of seeds and biofertilisers, or involvement in educational activities such as in the educational farm, as happens today.

### Examples of the “Garden City multi-actor food system” in action

One of the central lessons drawn from this close examination is that the three factors just introduced (Land as a collective asset; the role of the Heritage Foundation and the long-standing contribution of community-based Allotment and Horticultural Associations were combined in Letchworth to produce food related partnerships between a large array of actors. These partnerships are shaping food spaces and are at the core of the food system. Three of the resulting partnerships are presented as examples.

#### **Protection of hedgerows and soil conservation: partnership between the business sector, the Heritage Foundation and a beekeepers association**

Hedgerow Management is carried out by Rand Brothers Ltd, as part of the agreement with the Heritage Foundation. As stressed by J. Webbin<sup>2</sup>, *“The hedgerows are maintained in blocks on a three-year rotation in line with the Agri-Environmental Agreement with Natural England. This means that no more than one third of the hedges are cut in any one-year. There are a number of benefits to biodiversity through this type of Hedgerow Management. The farmland around Letchworth comprises of over 50km of hedges”*. This example brings an important element on the legacy of garden City as promoting food production [here by Rand Brothers Ltd under a lease with the Heritage Foundation], with the perspective of inserting food production within a sustainable model of soil conservation respectful of environment.

Thanks to the management of hedgerows and agriculture free from chemical pesticides, a **beekeepers association** currently has 25 hives located throughout the estate. “The bees not only act as pollinators for our crops but are also used as training facilities for new beekeepers”<sup>3</sup>. This example again highlights the role of the local actors, in this case a private company committed to sustainable development and a local grassroots association to maintain the flame of food related activities.

The roads as well feature wide verges and are tree lined. In fact the number of trees makes the town once of the worst urban centres if you suffer from tree pollen allergies. Though the term “Garden City” isn’t about flowers and trees, but more about the social objectives, undoubtedly there is a strong garden feel to the town, and a realisation of the goal of bringing town and country truly together.

<sup>2</sup> Webbin, John, Biodiversity, March 25, 2015, Posted by Paul McKenna on Friday 20 Mar, 2015

<sup>3</sup> Webbin [ibid]

## The Wynd Community gardens: partnership between the Heritage Foundation, the Royal Horticultural Society and others.

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Figure 24. Wynd Community Garden. Partners celebrating the opening of the Wynd Community Garden, Letchworth

Another successful partnership spearheaded by the Heritage Foundation is Wynd Community Garden, opened in 2014 in the heart of Letchworth. A second one followed at the Standalone farm referred to already. They were created with the Royal Horticultural Society, Britain in Bloom group ARCH and local volunteers. Even if their intention is not so much to grow food, this initiative “also delivers a learning programme to run alongside the project, which included a series of introductory gardening sessions”<sup>4</sup> [see picture 24]

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.letchworth.com/rhs>, consulted June 2017

**New orchards: an evolving partnership between various local and national associations.**

The community and private orchard planted in 2010 and its further developments resulted from various partnership involving LGC Farms / Heritage Foundation, Natural England, Transition Town Letchworth, a small local company and volunteers from schools and from the city.

In 2014, the apple trees were mature enough and **Apple Cottage Ciders**, a local producer got volunteers to harvest the apples that were turned into cider for a local beer festival [see picture 12]. They are also supplying local pubs with a unique variety of cider made from a Hertfordshire variety of apple. This example highlights again the modernity of food chains, adapted to local market niches and generating local jobs. What is original here is that they are perfectly fitting into a sustainable model with the Heritage Foundation playing a key role [lease of the orchard], along with young volunteers participating in the picking up of the apples and a collective ownership of the land that allows for this sort of enterprise to start up.



## 5. Concluding remarks

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The historical analysis of Letchworth and the Garden City movement suggests that four drivers underpinned the successful integration of food into its urban planning

- A collective and communal land property regime;
- Strong organisations, such as the Heritage Foundation to own, manage, develop and redistribute the benefits of the land,
- Grassroots organisations able to maintain the city region food chain spirit alive through time and,
- A business sector committed to a locally based sustainable food system.

The combination of these elements emerges as one key reason behind the permanence and the positive evolution of the first Garden City through its well over hundred years of life. In addition, this combination has generated creative partnerships that constantly renewed and shaped food related spaces transforming some land uses and contributing positively to the City Region Food system.

A second lesson is that the Garden City as a Social City concept and the planning experience of Letchworth illustrate the very notion of City Region Food Systems. Why? Because they are an evolutionary combination of:

- **Multi-scalar and multiple food related spaces** [from backyard to green belt and rural land between garden cities]. These multiple spaces are the physical base of the Food System and are essential to be considered by urban and regional planners.
- **Multiple symbiotic food related actors.** The creation of positive partnerships working in synergy and the key role played by the LGC Heritage Foundation, as the steward and owner of most of the land. In addition, food plays a fully an inclusive role, linking up different age groups and social groups [elderly in allotments to-day –see picture 18], youth or women during the war through multiple actions and multiple spaces in the city.
- **Multi sectoral dimensions.** Various sectors in the city, such as waste management, environment protection, or economic policies and job generation have been related one way or another to food. This multi-sectoral dimension relates as well to the fact

that through history food related activities have happened through the whole food chain - from the “apple tree to the pub” and from the “land to the table”.

Our analysis suggests that city and regional planners need to learn the lessons from Letchworth and the Garden City movement. They need to be aware of evolving planning principles for city region food systems innovative solutions for increasing self-sufficiency in cities and for more resilient food systems. The role for planners should not be to only “design and formulate”, but to empower residents and give people the tools, including the land, to create their own solutions. What this means is that planners today need to think about the long-term provision of green - food and non-food - spaces as a community asset, provide strong governance to make sure that remains the case; and, to recognize that food related income, including land rental income, can contribute to the long economic sustainability of the settlement. Food related efforts can also contribute to the social, ecological and economic sustainability of the place.

### **What is the legacy today of Garden Cities for better integrating food into urban planning?**

Letchworth through its capacity to produce food, even if not primarily for its residents and maintain through time quite a high environmental urban quality, primarily not for the better off, remains an inspiring example for the 21st century. One key question remains: How and to what extent the **Garden City** principles and the lessons learned from Letchworth can be used for better integrating food in urban/city region planning and in which situations?

Our answer is that these principles remain valid and could guide the development of new neighbourhoods and reconversion / renovation / refurbishment of old social housing developments. At the same time, they could guide the expansion and the creation of small and medium size cities and towns that have cheaper arable land available that could supply nutritious food for their residents and for larger urbanised cities. The most fertile grounds for their application is when combined with Community Land Trusts and other forms of collective, communal and cooperative forms of land tenure, that in essence remains the most precious legacy from Ebenezer Howard’s and its followers for our common future.

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## List of some Garden Cities and Garden Neighbourhoods<sup>1</sup>

**Letchworth Garden City**, Herts., UK Letchworth was the world's first Garden City, founded by Ebenezer Howard in 1903 based on the ideas he set out in his 1898 book, 'To-Morrow: A Peaceful Path To Real Reform'.

**Canberra**, Australia Planned by Walter Burley Griffin and his partner and wife Marion Mahony Griffin (who won a competition)

**Hellerau, Dresden**, Germany First gartenstadt in Germany, located four miles from Dresden and connected to it by tram. Created by Karl Schmidt, owner of furniture company Deutsche Werkstätten für Handwerkskunst (German Workshop for Handcrafted art).

**Jardim America, Sao Paulo**, Brazil Established in 1917 Jardim América is perhaps the most famous garden city inspired example in Brazil and was designed by Barry Parker in a suburb of São Paulo.

**Welwyn Garden City**, Herts. UK The world's second Garden City was founded by Ebenezer Howard in 1920 and designed by Louis De Soissons. It was subsequently designated as a New Town under the 1946 New Towns Act.

**Kapuskasing**, Ontario, Canada One of the first planned settlements in Canada, designed along Garden City lines, around a main local industry, Spruce Falls paper mill, who have printed The New York Times since 1928.

**Den-en-Chofu, Tokyo**, Japan Den-en-Chofu was Japan's first Garden Suburb, developed on the outskirts of Tokyo in the 1920s to provide housing for rail commuters.

**Podkowa Lesna, Warsaw**, Poland Poland's signature Garden Suburb, Podkowa Lesna (literally 'Horseshoe Grove') was built in the 1920s following the arrival of the electric commuter railway from the outskirts of Warsaw to the city centre.

**Wekerletelep, District XIX, Budapest**, Hungary

**Stains, Ile-de-France, Seine-Saint-Denis, Paris**, France The 'cite-jardin' of

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<sup>1</sup> Supplied by the International Garden Cities Institute

Stains was built in the 1920s devised by Henri Sellier and designed by architects and Georges Eugene & Gonnot Albenque.

**Tapiola, Espoo** City region, Finland (10km West of Helsinki) Tapiola was built by the private non-profit organisation the Asuntosaatio (the Housing Foundation), which was formed in 1951 under the leadership of Heikki von Hertzen, a garden city advocate.

**Sunnyside Gardens, Queens, New York, USA**

**Seaside, Walton County**, Florida, USA

**Romerstadt, Nidder Valley, Heddernheim, Frankfurt**, Germany Located on the site of a first century Roman town, Römerstadt was built as one of a series of satellite settlements in the Nidda Valley around Frankfurt.

**Radburn, Fair Lawn, Bergen County**, New Jersey, USA

**Pinelands, Cape Town**, South Africa

**Milanino, Milan, Italy: a suburb of Milan**, was a garden village founded in 1907 and inspired by English designs (Letchworth Garden City and Hampstead Garden Suburb were named influences).

**Margarethenhöhe**, Essen, Germany: founded in 1906 by the Krupp steel company, whose employees made up half of the suburb's residents.

**Gartenstadt Marga**, Brieske, Senftenberg, Brandenburg, Germany

**Greenhills**, Hamilton County, Ohio, United States: Greenhills is one of three government sponsored 'greenbelt' communities.

**Greendale**, Milwaukee County, Wisconsin, United States. Greendale is one of three government sponsored 'greenbelt' communities.

**Greenbelt**, Prince George's County, Maryland, United States Greenbelt is one of three government sponsored 'greenbelt' communities.

**Colonel Light Gardens**, City of Mitcham, Adelaide, Australia Originally known as Mitcham Garden Suburb it was renamed Colonel Light Gardens in 1921 to honour the surveyor responsible for Adelaide's town plan.

**Buckingham**, Arlington County, Virginia, USA

**Champlain Housing Trust**, Burlington, Vermont, USA. A community land trust that delivers affordable housing. The most successful in the USA. Also developed Intervale a scheme for developing local food on a 200 acre site.

**Wandsbek Gartenstadt**, Hamburg, Germany. A co-operative housing suburb with 5,000+ members based on Garden City principles.



## **RUAF**

The RUAF Global Partnership for Sustainable Urban Agriculture and Food Systems provides innovative solutions in support to city and municipal governments and multi-stakeholder platforms in adapting and changing their city region food system based on the principles of food sovereignty and the universal right to food, sustainable and resilient cities, and multi-stakeholder engagement. The partnership currently consists of nine organisations (cities, NGOs, research) linked to a dense network of partners in the global North and South. RUAF has engaged with over 100 local and international partner organisations and worked in 50 cities in over 40 different countries.

RUAF supports local and subnational governments, urban producer organisations, NGOs, CBOs, research centres and other stakeholders, with training, technical assistance, action-research and policy advice.

RUAF supports global agendas including the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the New Urban Agenda (NUA), in response to the increasing urbanisation of poverty and challenges that cities and city regions face in ensuring secure access to food, productive livelihoods and resilient development for their citizens.

RUAF regularly synthesises its local, national and international knowledge exchanges, advocacy and learning activities. It disseminates this synthesis on-line through the Urban Agriculture Magazine, RUAF papers and up-dates, as well as partner publications and international meetings. All publications can be downloaded at [www.ruaf.org](http://www.ruaf.org).

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