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PLANNING THE URBAN FUTURE IN 1960s BRITAIN*

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ABSTRACT. *This article recovers Buckinghamshire county council's proposal to build a monorail city for 250,000 residents during the 1960s. The project was eventually taken over by Whitehall, which proceeded to establish Britain's largest new town of Milton Keynes instead, but from 1962 to 1968 local officials pursued their monorail metropolis. By telling the story of 'North Bucks New City', the article develops a series of claims. First, the proposal should be understood not as the eccentric creation of a single British county, but rather as one iteration of larger state efforts to manage the densities and distributions of growing populations. Second, while the 1960s witnessed the automobile's decisive triumph as a means of personal mobility in Britain, that very triumph ironically generated critiques of the car and quests for alternatives. Third, the monorail was part of a complex social vision that anticipated – and, in part through the facilitation of recreational shopping, sought to alleviate – a crisis of delinquency expected to result from a world of automation and affluence. Fourth, despite its 'futuristic' monorail, the plan ultimately represented an effort by experts and the state to manage social change along congenial lines. Fifth, the proposal advanced a nationalist urbanism, promising renewed global stature for post-imperial Britain by building upon its long urban history. Finally, the article concludes by arguing that this unrealized vision points to the limitations of 'modernism' in the history of urban planning, and to the problems of teleology in the history of the 1960s.*

In the spring of 1965, as the British government prepared its national plan, the route to economic prosperity seemed obvious enough to Professor Cyril Northcote-Parkinson. In a world after empire, Parkinson suggested, why should the world's first urban nation not specialize in the export of cities? Addressing the annual conference of the National Federation of Buildings Trades Employers, Parkinson proposed that British companies send houses, flats, and shops

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throughout the developing world. Such a plan would require these companies to develop considerable technical expertise, but that could be gained by building a new British city entirely from scratch. Parkinson proceeded to offer a fantastic vision of a city constructed on three horizontal planes, with commercial traffic below, passenger cars in the middle, and pedestrians above; tall buildings in the centre would be connected by bridges at the thirteenth floors, all overlooking a picturesque lake. Visiting tourists, struck by the achievement, would wonder what a nation capable of engineering such a feat might be able to offer their own countries, ensuring that the export of urbanism would offer Britain both domestic prosperity and international standing. The first step, however, was to build such a city within Britain itself: '[A] new city', Parkinson declared, 'newer than Brasília, better planned than New York, more convenient than Paris, would do more for British prestige than a score of misguided missiles or a dozen failures to reach the moon.'[1]

'Prof. Parkinson wants a "British Brasília"', announced *The Daily Telegraph*. The headline caught the eye of Buckinghamshire county's architect and planner, Fred Pooley, who wrote forthwith to Parkinson: 'I wonder if you would be interested in the work we have been doing on the North Bucks New City project.'[2] For three years, Pooley's office had been designing a city for 250,000 people between Bletchley and Wolverton. This 'North Bucks New City' was to consist of fifty 'townships' or 'villages' of 5,000 persons, arranged – as Figure 1 shows – around four circuits that together took the shape of a dragonfly's wings. The middle of each circuit would contain parks, schools, and sports arenas, the outer edges would house light industry such as paper manufacturing, and the pedestrianized centre would include facilities for shopping and entertainment – available year-round, thanks to an underground heating system. The city's boldest innovation, however, was its system of transport: a railway would run through the city, the M1 motorway would skirt along its eastern edge, and smaller roads would circle it, but transport inside the city would be handled by a quiet, automated, high-speed monorail. The monorail would be paid for out of local rates, and thus free at the point of service, and no home would be more than seven minutes from a station. The system would employ the latest surveillance technologies, enabling a single command station to track its cars, monitor its stations, and communicate with its staff.[3] Clean, safe monorails would thus whiz through the city – and even through

[1] 'Prof. Parkinson wants a "British Brasília"', *Daily Telegraph*, clipping held with the papers of Frederick B. Pooley at the Centre for Buckinghamshire Studies (CBS), AR 178/1981, NC/14. Parkinson was neither an architect nor a planner, but a naval historian, as well as the author of the humorous and bestselling *Parkinson's law* (Harmondsworth, 1957); see C. M. Turnbull, 'Parkinson, Cyril Northcote (1909–1993)', *Oxford dictionary of national biography* (*ODNB*), online edn, Oct. 2007, http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/53127.

[2] Pooley to Parkinson, 3 June 1965, CBS, AR 178/1981, NC/14. The remainder of this paragraph draws from R. Sharpe, 'A city for the 70s', CBS, AR 178/1981, NC/18A; the plan is also outlined in Pooley, *North Bucks New City* (Aylesbury, 1966).

[3] R. J. Eaton, 'Public transport system study', 1 Mar. 1965, CBS, AR 103/87, box 5, item 23, pp. 12–13.

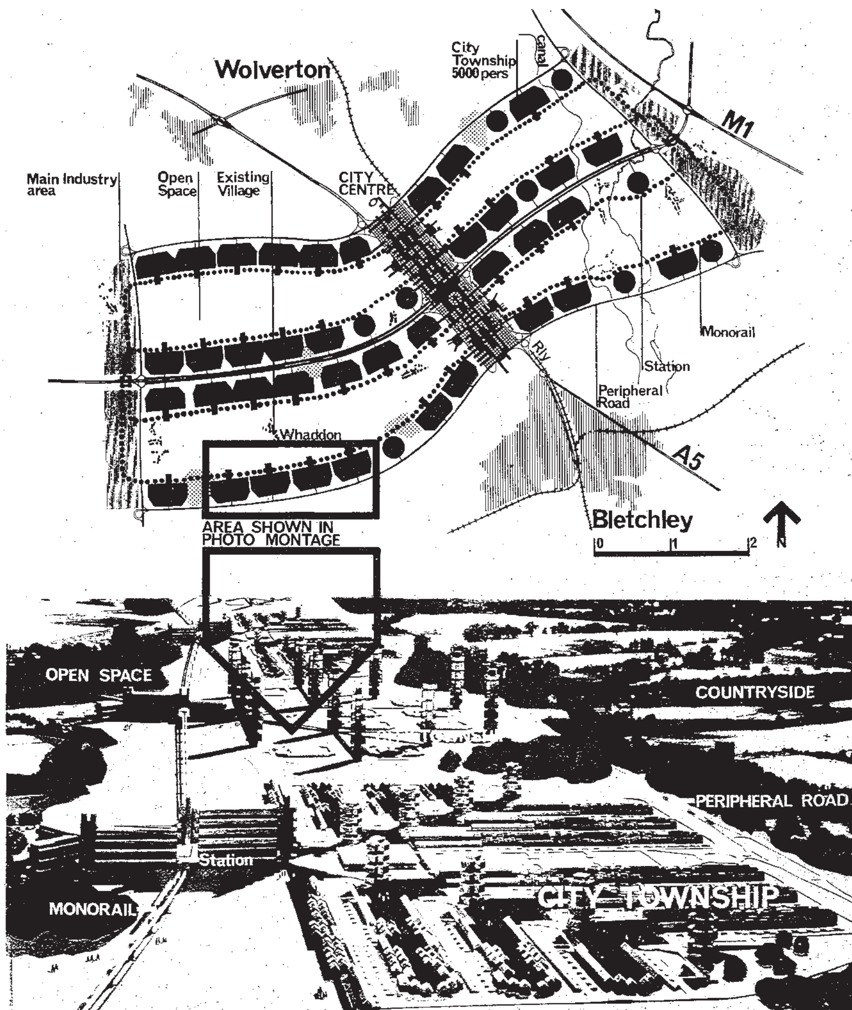

Fig. 1. Two views of North Bucks New City: first, a map showing the layout of the townships around four monorail loops; second, a model depicting several townships, with monorail stations along the left. Reproduced by permission of the Centre for Buckinghamshire Studies.

its buildings – on a track 'slung way above the people', atop a network of mesh ready to catch any suicidal jumpers in 'a resilient wire hammock'.[4] When one admiring journalist called the plan a 'city for the 70s', Pooley responded that he preferred to think of it as a 'city for the 90s in the 70s'.

[4] Eaton, 'North Bucks New City monorail: a feasibility study', Mar. 1965, CBS, AR 103/87, box 5, item 24, pp. 1–2.

North Bucks New City represents one iteration of the larger phenomenon of imagining the urban future during the 1960s.[5] The transatlantic pedigree of this tradition already included such landmarks as Ebenezer Howard's *To-morrow: a peaceful path to real reform* (1898), Corbusier's *Vers une architecture* (1923), Frank Lloyd Wright's 'Broadacre City' (begun 1924), Fritz Lang's *Metropolis* (1927, which opened with a shot of a monorail), and the Modern Architectural Research Group's (MARS) 'Plan for London' (1942).[6] These visions ranged from the idealistic to the dystopian, until the New Towns Act of 1946 offered British planners and architects the opportunity to turn designs into realities. The British state established fourteen new towns between 1946 and 1950, but the relatively modest designs of these initial efforts, which featured neighbourhood units and vernacular styles, disappointed the ambitions of more avant-garde architects and planners.[7] During the 1950s, Conservative governments established only one new town, preferring to expand existing cities instead, until the end of that decade when a surge in the birthrate contributed to a renewed round of new town development. Between 1961 and 1970, the number of British new towns nearly doubled, and this second generation of new towns saw significant departures in conception and construction. New towns of the 1960s featured higher population densities and modern shopping centres, but their most dramatic innovations resulted from the recent increase in private car ownership. Planners experimented with a variety of ways that cities might accommodate the car without succumbing to congestion, from highways in Cumbernauld (1955) to busways in Runcorn (1964) – and even, in initial designs, a hovercraft in

[5] See, for example, G. A. Jellicoe, *Motopia: a study in the evolution of urban landscape* (New York, NY, 1961); Ivor de Wolfe, *Civilia: the end of sub urban man* (London, 1971), discussed in Mark Clapson, *A social history of Milton Keynes: middle England/edge city* (London, 2004), pp. 73–4, and Richard J. Williams, *The anxious city: English urbanism in the late twentieth century* (London, 2004), pp. 76–81. See also John R. Gold, 'The city of the future and the future of the city', in Russell King, ed., *Geographical futures* (Sheffield, 1985), pp. 92–101; idem, *The experience of modernism: modern architects and the future city, 1928–1953* (London, 1997); idem, *The practice of modernism: modern architects and urban transformation, 1954–1972* (New York, NY, 2007); Volker M. Welter, 'Everywhere at any time: post-Second World War genealogies of the city of the future', in Iain Boyd Whyte, ed., *Man-made future: planning, education, and design in mid-twentieth century Britain* (London, 2007), pp. 59–77; Donna Goodman, *A history of the future* (New York, NY, 2008); Timothy Hyde, 'Architecture in the sixties and the sixties in architecture', *The Sixties*, 2 (2009), pp. 97–105.

[6] Ebenezer Howard, *To-morrow: a peaceful path to real reform* (London, 1898), subsequently published as *Garden cities of to-morrow* (London, 1902); Le Corbusier, *Vers une architecture* (Paris, 1923), published in English as *Towards a new architecture* (New York, NY, 1927); Frank Lloyd Wright, 'Broadacre City: an architect's vision', *New York Times Magazine*, 20 March 1932, pp. 8–9; Fritz Lang, dir., *Metropolis* (1927). Gold, *The experience of modernism*, ch. 2, discusses most of these examples; for a general intellectual history, see Peter Hall, *Cities of tomorrow: an intellectual history of urban planning and design in the twentieth century* (Oxford, 2002); Howard's programme and legacy are the subject of Peter Hall and Colin Ward, *Sociable cities: the legacy of Ebenezer Howard* (New York, NY, 1998); for a single treatment of Howard, Wright, and Corbusier, see Robert Fishman, *Urban utopias in the twentieth century: Ebenezer Howard, Frank Lloyd Wright, and Le Corbusier* (New York, NY, 1977); on the MARS 'Plan for London', see William Whyte, 'MARS group (act. 1933–1957)', *ODNB*, online edn., Sept. 2009, http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/theme/96308.

[7] Gold, *The experience of modernism*, pp. 194–200.

Washington (1964).[8] It was in this context – of more ambitious new town development, and more experimental transport design – that Pooley persuaded Buckinghamshire council to build a monorail metropolis in the county's rural north.

A key historiographical distinction separates imagined visions, such as Broadacre City or the MARS plan for London, from realized projects, such as Cumbernauld or Runcorn, which perhaps explains why historians tend to pass rapidly over North Bucks New City en route to its actually built successor, Milton Keynes.[9] There is no question that Milton Keynes warrants the attention: designated in 1967, Milton Keynes soon emerged as England's fastest-growing city and Britain's largest new town.[10] Thus Frank Markham's two-volume local history, *A history of Milton Keynes and district*, concludes with the establishment of Milton Keynes, but does not mention either Pooley or his plan.[11] Mark Clapson's excellent *Social history of Milton Keynes* does discuss 'Pooleyville' (as North Bucks New City came to be called), but his emphasis upon, and sympathy towards, the built city of Milton Keynes inclines him to depict Pooleyville as an obstacle thankfully avoided.[12] Terence Bendixson offers kind words for Pooley, but his magnanimity leads him to stress the continuity between North Bucks New City and Milton Keynes, rather than conveying the distinctiveness of Pooley's vision.[13] In his otherwise insightful account of Milton Keynes, Andy Beckett goes one step further, reducing North Bucks New City to 'the monorail Milton Keynes'.[14] But the most dismissive verdict has come from the planners of Milton Keynes themselves. In a roundtable discussion in 1995, while acknowledging the allure of Pooley's plan, the alumni of Milton Keynes Development Corporation recalled their co-ordinated 'destruction' of North Bucks New City, which persisted until

[8] Hall and Ward, *Sociable cities*, pp. 52–67; see also Gold, *The practice of modernism*, ch. 7, especially p. 146. The information about Washington's hovercraft service comes from Dominic Sandbrook, *White heat: a history of Britain in the swinging sixties* (London, 2006), p. 179; on British architecture generally during this period, see Nicholas Bullock, *Building the post-war world: modern architecture and reconstruction in Britain* (New York, NY, 2002); for an indication of the sheer extent of post-war planning, see Peter J. Larkham and Keith D. Lilley, *Planning the 'city of tomorrow': British reconstruction planning, 1939–1952: an annotated bibliography* (Pickering, 2001); for an analysis of those plans, see Larkham, 'Selling the future city: images in UK post-war reconstruction plans', in Boyd Whyte, ed., *Man-made future*, pp. 99–120.

[9] These are the criteria, for instance, in Robert H. Kargon and Arthur P. Molella, *Invented edens: techno-cities of the twentieth century* (Cambridge, MA, 2008).

[10] According to Williams, 'Milton Keynes amounts to the most comprehensive and thorough attempt to reimagine the English city of the late-twentieth century.' Williams, *The anxious city*, p. 55. The claim regarding the growth of Milton Keynes comes from Clapson, *A social history of Milton Keynes*, p. 1; Colin Ward calls Milton Keynes the 'last and largest' new town in *New town, home town: the lessons of experience* (London, 1993), pp. 18, 47. During the 1970s, only Aberdeen – in the midst of its oil boom – generated more jobs: Andy Beckett, *When the lights went out: Britain in the seventies* (London, 2009), p. 427.

[11] Frank Markham, *A history of Milton Keynes and district* (2 vols., Luton, 1973–5).

[12] Clapson, *A social history of Milton Keynes*, pp. 33–5, 71–2, 79.

[13] Terence Bendixson and John Platt, *Milton Keynes: image and reality* (Cambridge, 1992), p. 21. Platt researched the book, and Bendixson wrote it; I follow Bendixson's example by naming him as the author.

[14] Beckett, *When the lights went out*, p. 424.

Pooley finally acquiesced in the demise of his own proposal. 'So that', concluded Walter Bor, partner of the planning firm, 'was the story about Pooley.'[15]

That was one story about Pooley, but it was not the whole story. Rather than rushing towards Milton Keynes, this article lingers in North Bucks New City, because there is much to be learned from cities that were never built. Not only about how the future was imagined, but also how the present was managed: opportunities that beckoned, obstacles that threatened, and strategies available to deal with them both. From January 1962, when Pooley's office published its first report, until May 1965, when the county council shelved the scheme for lack of funding, Buckinghamshire proceeded with plans to build its monorail metropolis – and as late as October 1968, more than a year-and-a-half after the ministry of housing had officially designated Milton Keynes, Pooley maintained hope that something like his city might yet be built. For more than three years, he and his team – most notably his brilliant and indefatigable lieutenant, Bill Berrett – identified a site for their city, built models of its monorail and townships, commissioned transport feasibility studies, visiting working monorails abroad, fielded scores of international inquiries, negotiated (successfully) with local councils and (less successfully) with the ministry, and conducted more than a hundred public and private meetings. These efforts coincided with a frenetic period in British urban planning, as hundreds of proposals for the 'comprehensive redevelopment' of town and city centres flooded the ministry of housing and local government.[16] The future, it seemed, was being forged in Britain's cities, and few councils wanted to be left behind. The enthusiasm crested by the end of the decade, but not before making an enormous impact upon the nation's urban landscape: according to the historian John Gold, '[I]t was during these few years that the urban fabric changed more dramatically than almost any comparable period in British history.'[17] Working at precisely this moment and in exactly this context, Pooley may not have built a city, but he did produce an archive – and that archive offers an invaluable lens through which to examine the assumptions and ambitions that flourished spectacularly, only to recede rapidly, during this pivotal moment in Britain's long urban history.[18]

[15] See the discussion between Walter Bor, John de Monchaux, David Donnison, Peter Waterman, and David Lock in *The best laid plans: Milton Keynes since 1967*, ed. Mark Clapson, Mervyn Dobbin, and Peter Waterman (Luton, 1998), pp. 8–11, at pp. 9–10.

[16] Peter Mandler, discussing the redevelopment of town centres, notes that the ministry considered fifteen such schemes in 1959 and seventy in 1963, whereas by 1965 more than five hundred were in the works; he explains that these plans were increasingly 'characterised by gigantism and a belief in the technological quick-fix'. Mandler, 'New towns for old: the fate of the town centre', in Becky Conekin, Frank Mort, and Chris Waters, eds., *Moments of modernity: reconstructing Britain, 1945–1964* (New York, NY, 1999), pp. 208–27, at p. 220.

[17] Gold, *The practice of modernism*, p. 108.

[18] CBS, AR 178/1981. This collection consists of forty-six files of the county planning office, covering the years 1963–8; most (if not all) of the boxes give no indication of having been opened since being deposited in 1981.

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Whitehall did not make the plans, but it did make them possible. By the early 1960s, London's population was poised to swamp Buckinghamshire, just as increasing car ownership threatened to overwhelm the county's towns and villages. But if population pressures had increased, so, too, had the resources available to manage them: the first part of the M1 opened in 1959, and would soon link north Bucks to London, while the River Ouse was permitted to expand after 1961, increasing the region's access to drainage and water.[19] The British state's most powerful technology of population management, however, remained the New Towns Act of 1946, which Whitehall had already employed to establish sixteen new towns throughout England, Scotland, and Wales by 1962.[20] The British programme had parallels in a number of countries during the post-war period, as states inside and outside Europe – including, but not limited to, France, West Germany, Sweden, the Netherlands, the Soviet Union, Brazil, Venezuela, Nigeria, Egypt, and India – built new towns in order to redistribute populations, steer economic development, or establish new capitals.[21] Of the British projects, Basildon and Peterlee resulted from local petitioning, and London county council planned a new town called Hook that was never actually built, but in general the new towns were national efforts, and in fact no local authority had successfully developed a new town of its own.[22] It was thus an audacious move when, in January 1962, Buckinghamshire county council's departments of architecture and planning published the first in a series of reports exploring the possibility of a new city in north Buckinghamshire. Mindful of the problems posed by population and congestion, that report fastened on the idea of a monorail city for 250,000 residents. During the next two years, working quietly behind the scenes, Pooley and his office developed the plan for North Bucks New City.[23]

Originally from London's east end, Frederick Bernard Pooley qualified as an architect, planner, and surveyor before the Second World War.[24] During the war, he served with the royal engineers, and afterwards he worked as a deputy

[19] Joe Moran, *On roads: a hidden history* (London, 2009), pp. 26–9; David L. Rydz, 'The formation of the Great Ouse water authority: part II', *Public Administration*, 49 (1971), pp. 245–68.

[20] Ward, *New town, home town*, p. 47. See also Helen Meller, *Towns, plans, and society in modern Britain* (Cambridge, 1997), pp. 71–3.

[21] Neil Brenner, *New state spaces: urban governance and the rescaling of statehood* (New York, NY, 2004), ch. 4, especially pp. 154–7; E. Y. Galantay, A. K. Constandse, and T. Ohba, eds., *New towns world-wide* (The Hague, 1985); Jane Hobson, 'New towns, the modernist planning project, and social justice: the cases of Milton Keynes, UK and 6th October, Egypt', UCL urban development and planning working paper no. 108 (London, 1999).

[22] Ward, *New town, home town*, p. 38; Gold, *The practice of modernism*, pp. 151–5. Manchester and Birmingham also considered building satellite communities, but relented in the late 1950s after public inquiries: Hall and Ward, *Sociable cities*, p. 56. Bendixson rightly remarks of Pooley's plan, 'No county council had before done anything like it – and none has since.' Bendixson and Platt, *Milton Keynes*, p. 21.

[23] Pooley, *North Bucks New City*; Bendixson and Platt, *Milton Keynes*, pp. 22–32.

[24] Unless otherwise noted, this paragraph draws from Paul Finch, 'Fred Pooley – quiet-voiced pragmatist – dies aged 81', *Architects' Journal* (online edn), 26 Mar. 1998.

architect and planner in the rebuilding, first, of West Ham, and then of Coventry. In 1953 he became Buckinghamshire's chief architect, and in 1961 he added the post of county planning officer as well.[25] He collected a CBE for services to architecture in 1968, before moving to the greater London council in 1974, by which time he was also serving as president of the Royal Institute of British Architects. Pooley's aesthetic was contemporary, but not avant-garde, and the difficulty of characterizing his work complicates accounts that would divide post-war architecture between 'modernism' and its critics. 'Determinedly traditionalist' to some, 'one of the most inventive architects of his time' to others, Pooley sparred with 'preservationists' but called himself a 'conservationist'.[26] The distinction was subtle, but revealing: 'preservation', for Pooley, implied halting development, but 'conservation' meant guiding it. 'We should look after the best that we have inherited', he maintained, but he also believed that new projects 'should be of our times'. So while he became known for his dislike of large concrete projects, and for his preference for vernacular styles, in both Coventry and Aylesbury Pooley worked with the typically modern media of concrete and towers. His most notorious project, for example, was the headquarters he designed for Buckingamshire county council, a concrete tower erected in 1966 that the architectural critic (and Pooley's friend) Ian Nairn memorably branded 'Fred's fort' – but which locals still refer to as 'Pooley's folly'.[27] Yet that tower stands in contrast to much of Pooley's work, with its commitment – even during the brutalist 1960s – to 'homes-on-the-ground' featuring brickwork and pitched roofs. So if the label 'modernist' does not quite fit, it is less because Pooley was not 'modern' than because his pragmatic style resists categorization within so programmatic a vision. Personally, Pooley's manner was affable and winning: far from the 'monster' depicted by preservation societies, Bendixson describes him as 'a purring, tweedy, aitch-dropping teddy-bear of a man', and his correspondence reveals a surfeit of good humour without an ounce of pretension.[28] But that agreeable manner concealed a bold imagination and a keen knack for politics, qualities that served him well when opportunity presented itself in the early 1960s.

The British state had long been concerned with the distribution of its population, particularly its concentration in and around London.[29] In 1937, the government appointed a royal commission to study the matter; three years later,

[25] Unidentified clipping held at the CBS: 'Chiltern life', Mar./Apr. 1975, p. 9.

[26] Ibid.; Margaret Smith, 'County offices architect dies', *Bucks Herald*, 18 Mar. 1998; Liz Tresilian, 'The preservationists', *Bucks Life*, Oct. 1966, pp. 8–11 at p. 10.

[27] The information that Nairn authored the well-known appellation 'Fred's fort' comes from 'Mutual enterprise at Aylesbury', *Design*, 1 May 1971, pp. 58–65, at p. 65. Three decades later, ungenerous obituarists preferred 'Pooley's folly': Smith, 'County offices architect dies'; 'Death of former county architect', *Bucks Advertiser*, 20 Mar. 1998.

[28] Tresilian, 'The preservationists', p. 10; Bendixson and Platt, *Milton Keynes*, p. 21.

[29] Ikki Suge writes, 'Reforms in Britain after 1945 were in large part post-war answers to pre-war questions; the new towns policy was the post-war British government's answer to the inter-war expansion of London.' Suge, 'The nature of decision-making in the post-war new towns policy: the case of Basildon, c. 1945–70', *Twentieth Century British History*, 16 (2005), pp. 146–69, at p. 146.

the Barlow report on the 'distribution of the industrial population' identified a worrisome concentration of population in the home counties.[30] The concerns were economic, but also strategic, and the experience of wartime bombing only made them more pressing.[31] Barlow recommended development around London to facilitate the dispersal of its population, and in 1944 Patrick Abercrombie endorsed that recommendation in his *Greater London plan*.[32] Barlow and Abercrombie inspired two of the most important planning acts in twentieth-century British history: the New Towns Act of 1946, which established mechanisms placing urban development under the central government's control, and the Town and Country Planning Act of 1947, which (among many other things) required local councils to clear their development plans with Whitehall.[33] Between 1946 and 1950, six of the fourteen new towns the Labour government designated were intended to relieve pressure upon London.[34] But even such aggressive action could not alter the fact that, in 1951, Britain was already one of the most densely populated countries on the planet, and during the next two decades that density only increased.[35]

By the early 1960s, due to a rising birthrate and commonwealth immigration, these longstanding concerns about the distribution of population were joined by fresh concerns about its growth.[36] In line with major European cities from Barcelona to Belgrade, London's growth during this period was especially pronounced.[37] In 1961, the government appointed a commission to study population dynamics in and around the capital, and three years later the *South East study* found enormous population pressures upon London and its environs.[38] There were 18,000,000 people who lived in the triangle between Dover, Weymouth, and the Wash, 35 per cent of the country's entire population. That number had increased by 3,000,000 since the 1930s, and was projected to rise by another 3,500,000 by the 1980s. London's growth had especially shattered expectations, to the point that, according to the report, the capital seemed 'in danger of choking'. The study identified three ways forward: do nothing, continue with existing plans, or reconfigure the entire region's population. Endorsing this third – and

[30] *Report of the royal commission on the distribution of the industrial population*, cmnd. 6153 (London, 1940), discussed in Ward, *New town, home town*, pp. 31–2.

[31] These economic concerns, and the belief that they could be managed by the state, were part of the post-war 'spatial Keynesianism' discussed by Brenner, *New state spaces*, ch. 4, especially p. 115.

[32] Patrick Abercrombie, *Greater London plan* (London, 1945).

[33] Meller, *Towns, plans, and society in modern Britain*, ch. 5; Jules Lubbock, '1947 and all that: why has the act lasted so long?', in Boyd Whyte, ed., *Man-made future*, pp. 1–15.

[34] Meller, *Towns, plans, and society in modern Britain*, p. 72.

[35] Brian Harrison, *Seeking a role: the United Kingdom, 1951–1970* (Oxford, 2009), p. 146; Mandler, 'New towns for old', p. 213. See also Bendixson and Platt, *Milton Keynes*, chs. 2–3, which in turn draws from P. L. Mortimer, 'Urban development in north Buckinghamshire, 1930–1970' (M.Phil. thesis, Open University, 1984).

[36] M. J. Wise, 'The future of the south-east', *Geographical Journal*, 130 (1964), pp. 270–3; Bendixson and Platt, *Milton Keynes*, pp. 23–5; Gold, *The practice of modernism*, p. 247.

[37] Tony Judt, *Postwar: a history of Europe since 1945* (New York, NY, 2005), pp. 385–6.

[38] This discussion is based upon the accompanying white paper, *South East England*, cmnd. 2308 (London, 1964), a copy of which is held in CBS, AR 178/1981, NC/1.

most radical – option, the *South East study* called for an expansion of the new towns programme. It recommended building on sites more remote from London, with an eventual target of housing an additional 1,250,000 people, and specifically mentioned the possibility of expanding in north Bucks.

The *South East study* provided a timely boost to thinking already underway at Buckinghamshire county council. Since 1954, the county's development had been guided by a plan with the ministry of housing and local government's approval, as required by the Town and Country Planning Act. A review of that plan was due in 1959, but Pooley already believed more thorough action was required. During the next few years, working with the county clerk, R. E. Millard, and the chairs of three committees (Ralph Verney in finance, S. T. Ireland in works, and S. A. Comben in planning), Pooley and Berrett produced a series of documents.[39] The first was published in January 1962: 'The overspill problem in Buckinghamshire – a new city?' identified the problem and proposed a solution.[40] London's growth, it explained, threatened to overwhelm the southern third of the county, which the council had therefore already declared a greenbelt, while the centre of the county was close enough to London that expansion might render it a mere satellite of the capital. North Bucks, however, remained largely undeveloped, partly because a water shortage had blocked expansion in the late 1940s. The Great Ouse Water Act of 1961 resolved that situation, enabling the planners to consider a new city between Wolverton and Bletchley.[41] Figure 2 shows the city's proposed location in the county's north (almost precisely the area that is today home to Milton Keynes), and indicates its prospective utility in drawing population away from the greenbelt in the south. Such a city, the authors suggested, could help the region cope not only with the overflow from London, but also with immigration from the commonwealth.[42] The density, growth, and shifts of population thus posed problems on a number of levels – inside Buckinghamshire, around London, throughout England, and within the commonwealth – and a new city in north Bucks promised to address them all at a stroke.

While population pressures could be alleviated by building a new city, mounting concerns about traffic congestion required innovations in the urban form. North Bucks New City was being planned at a pivotal moment in the history of transport. The number of motor vehicles in Britain doubled between 1950 and 1960, from nearly 4,500,000 to more than 9,000,000, so that by the early 1960s it was common to refer to the nation as a 'car-owning democracy'.[43]

[39] Ian Nairn, 'The best in Britain', *Observer*, 22 Nov. 1964.

[40] 'The overspill problem in Bucks: a new city?' (1962), discussed in Pooley, *North Bucks New City*, pp. 1–2; reprinted in 1964, and held in CBS, AR 178/1981, 'New city in North Bucks' (uncatalogued).

[41] On the water troubles, see Markham, *A history of Milton Keynes and district*, II, pp. 307–8.

[42] 'North Bucks New City: CDA and designation: 2. report' (Aylesbury, 1964), p. 2, a copy of which is available in the Milton Keynes library, R L060:71.

[43] B. R. Mitchell, *British historical statistics* (Cambridge, 1988), p. 558, cited in Simon Gunn, 'The Buchanan report, environment, and the problem of traffic in 1960s Britain', *Twentieth Century British History* (forthcoming).

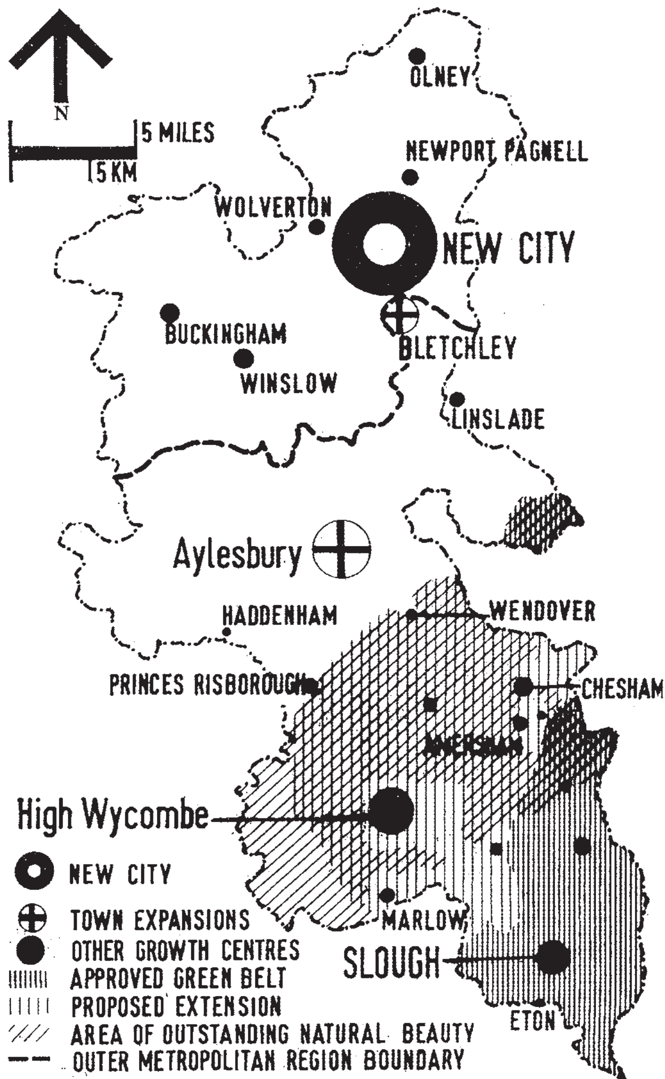

Fig. 2. Map of Buckinghamshire, showing the greenbelt bordering London in the south, and the new city's location between Wolverton and Bletchley in the north. Reprinted from Fred Pooley, *North Bucks New City* (Aylesbury, 1966), p. 9, by permission of the Centre for Buckinghamshire Studies.

The impact of these changes upon the daily lives of millions is difficult to overstate. Consider, for example, the seemingly mundane matter of getting to and from work. In the 1940s and 1950s, the three means by which men most often commuted were bicycle, train, and bus, with cars and vans fourth. During the 1960s and 1970s, however, journeys by car and van surged comfortably into the lead,

accounting for nearly as many commutes as every other mode combined. The numbers among women were even more striking: in the 1940s and 1950s, of eight means of commuting, cars and vans came in seventh (ahead only of motorcycles); whereas by the 1960s and 1970s, cars and vans were the most common means of women's commutes, accounting for nearly one in three trips.[44] Personal affluence played a part in this shift, but so too did the state, as the ministry of transport built a thousand miles of motorway between 1962 and 1972 – more than a mile per week, every week, for a decade.[45]

This triumph of the car posed challenges for towns and cities, and it was in this context that Colin Buchanan's committee published its landmark *Traffic in towns*. Commissioned by the ministry of transport, this unlikely bestseller – with the unpromising subtitle, *A study of the long term problems of traffic in urban areas* – depicted a nation at a crossroads. Britain boasted higher rates of car ownership than any other European country, but lacked the motorway infrastructure of Germany or the United States.[46] 'The problems of traffic are crowding in upon us with desperate urgency', Buchanan wrote, to the point that clogged roads threatened 'general thrombosis' – especially in the south-east.[47] Congestion and accidents presented challenges, but the car's greatest threat lay in its impact upon Britain's cities.[48] Traffic seemed poised to overwhelm town and city centres, most of which had developed before cars existed. An effective response must be neither piecemeal nor uncoordinated: indeed, the report insisted, it demanded nothing less than the reconceptualization of the city.[49] 'It is clear that any attempt to implement these ideas would result in a gigantic programme of urban reconstruction', read the preface. 'We see no reason to be frightened of this.'[50] Such reconstruction might take the form of physical segregation, with traffic and pedestrians separated on distinct planes, but, above all, it required that 'freedom' be understood as something more than the freedom to drive where one pleased.[51] Planners thus found themselves in an unenviable position, certain to be criticized for either action or inaction, even as the fate of Britain's cities lay squarely in their hands.[52]

Traffic in towns confronted the very challenge that bedevilled Pooley and his colleagues: how to plan a city for the car, when the car threatened the city?[53] This problem loomed over the planning of new towns at the time, and Pooley

[44] Colin G. Pooley, 'Mobility in the twentieth century: substituting commuting for migration?', in David Gilbert, David Matless, and Brian Short, eds., *Geographies of British modernity: space and society in the twentieth century* (Oxford, 2003), pp. 80–96, at p. 88.

[45] Moran, *On roads*, pp. 72–3.

[46] Gunn, 'The Buchanan report'.

[47] Ministry of transport, *Traffic in towns: a study of the long term problems of traffic in urban areas* (London, 1963), p. 28; the reference to 'general thrombosis' comes from paragraph 8 of the steering group's unpaginated preface, co-written by Geoffrey Crowther.

[48] Ibid., paragraphs 15–19.

[49] Ibid., paragraph 35.

[50] Ibid., paragraph 40.

[51] Ibid., paragraph 39, p. 32.

[52] Ibid., p. 32.

[53] The connections between Buchanan's findings and Pooley's thinking were explicit, for instance in the epigraphs adorning a pamphlet the latter's office produced: 'The case for the monorail' (1965), CBS, AR 178/1981, NC/12A.

himself had been grappling with it since his time in Coventry after the war – where, in the very heart of Britain's motor city, he had helped establish the country's first pedestrian centre.[54] By the early 1960s, the conflict between car and city was only more pressing: in the urgent language of the Buckinghamshire planners, 'The motor car will destroy a human environment and inhibit civilised living if allowed complete freedom.'[55] Pooley put the paradox this way: people wanted cars because they provided access to the benefits afforded by affluence (for instance, shopping and entertainment), but the provision of those benefits required concentrations of population that produced gridlock in cities. Later in the decade, the 'dispersal' of population and services would emerge as a fashionable solution to this problem, best exemplified by the architectural critic Reyner Banham's paean to Los Angeles.[56] But this revisionist redemption of American sprawl was not yet mainstream when North Bucks New City was being planned and, in fact, Pooley invoked the spectre of Los Angeles to discredit the prospect of dispersal. If planners remained committed to dense city centres, he maintained, they had no choice but to identify alternatives to the car.[57] On at least one occasion, Pooley confessed to finding inspiration in the slogan 'defeat the motor car', but generally that sort of antagonism was not his style.[58] Instead, the monorail in North Bucks New City – like the pedestrian centre in Coventry – should be understood not as a rejection of the car, but as a response to its success: it was the automobile's triumph that required a re-imagined city.[59]

In September 1962, the monorail made its debut in a second report on the possibility of a new city for north Bucks. Pooley had asked Berrett to consider the implications of a new city of 250,000 people; he then left for a holiday in Scotland, and during the next fortnight Berrett produced a document that became the foundation of subsequent planning.[60] A city for 250,000 residents, that September report stated, could not realistically be planned assuming complete motor car use. Some form of public transportation was therefore essential, and monorail loops offered the added benefit of leaving ample space in their centres.[61] A third report in December developed these ideas further: 'townships' or 'villages' of 5,000–7,000 people would be developed along monorail circuits like 'beads on a string', with each township's monorail station including amenities such

[54] Smith, 'County offices architect dies'.

[55] 'Review of development plan' (1963), CBS, AR 178/1981, NC/7.

[56] Reyner Banham, *Los Angeles: the architecture of four ecologies* (New York, NY, 1971).

[57] 'Interview with Fred Pooley' (c. Nov./Dec. 1964), CBS, AR 178/1981, NC/18A.

[58] Sharpe, 'A city for the 70s'.

[59] Discussing public transportation in Chicago at the turn of the twentieth century, Blair Ruble adds welcome texture to the conventional narrative of the automobile's triumph: *Second metropolis: pragmatic pluralism in gilded age Chicago, Silver Age Moscow, and Meiji Osaka* (Washington DC, 2001), ch. 5.

[60] Undated interview with Bill Berrett, included on a CD-ROM produced by IDOX Information Services: Anthony Burton and Joyce Hartly, eds., *The new towns record, 1946–2002* (London, n.d.).

[61] Pooley, *North Bucks New City*, pp. 2–3.

as schools, shops, and clinics. The 'beads' (or townships) would be distributed along the 'string' (the monorail), so future development could be accommodated by adding more strings of beads. Since the villages were to be situated outside the monorail lines, no neighbourhood would be divided by its tracks, and the areas inside the tracks would leave space for parks, sporting grounds, and other amenities. Each home would have a garage, as well as access to roads, but intra-city travel would emphasize the monorail, funded out of local rates and thus free of ticketing.[62] The city would be large, but built to human scale: in addition to each home's proximity to a station, no station would be further than a fifteen-minute journey to the centre. Children could cross safely beneath the tracks without dodging traffic, while elevated footpaths in the city centre would separate pedestrians from traffic below.[63] One study concluded that these precautions, coupled with automated fail-safe features, would curtail the risk of injury, while the system as a whole would save more than seven million miles of car journeys per year.[64]

These ideas were fantastic, even futuristic, but they were by no means otherworldly or especially eccentric. *Traffic in towns* similarly endorsed the segregation of pedestrians from traffic, and that proposal also featured in Professor Northcote's address in Edinburgh. The commitments to technology (in the monorail), linearity (along its circuits), expandability (through the addition of subsequent loops), and leisure and consumption (discussed in the next section) were all typical of British planning during these busy years of urban redevelopment.[65] And the plan was positively hard-headed by comparison with the true avant-garde in British architecture at the time, its proposal to manage future growth by appending additional monorail loops only a faint (and unwitting) echo of Archigram's playful 'plug-in city' of mobile pods for living. Indeed, Archigram's experimental schemes had more in common with the 'spatial urbanists' in France and the Metabolists in Japan than the departments of architecture and planning at Buckinghamshire county council.[66] The alluring drawings that Berrett produced, which depicted residents walking amid low-slung modern buildings, were more in tune with the 'townscape' aesthetic associated with the *Architectural Review*, while Berrett's models of residential villages, which featured soaring towers alongside homes-on-the-ground, developed a domestic engagement with international design trends that was by then well established.[67]

[62] Ibid., p. 4.

[63] 'North Bucks New City: CDA and designation: 2. report', p. 6.

[64] Eaton, 'Public transport system study', pp. 11, 9; the precise estimate was 7,127,000 miles annually.

[65] Gold, *The practice of modernism*, ch. 11.

[66] Priscilla Chapman, 'The plug-in city', *Sunday Times*, 20 Sept. 1964; Larry Busbea, *Topologies: the urban utopia in France, 1960–1970* (Cambridge, MA, 2007); Hyde, 'Architecture in the sixties and the sixties in architecture'.

[67] Williams, *The anxious city*, ch. 2; William Whyte, 'The Englishness of English architecture: modernism and the making of a national international style, 1927–1957', *Journal of British Studies*, 48 (2009), pp. 441–65.

As for the monorail, while it promised to take Britain into the future, its advocates were quick to note that it boasted a long and proven history. The county's feasibility study cited the Wupper Valley line in West Germany, which had safely carried 950,000,000 passengers since opening in 1901.[68] *The Observer* ran a feature on the German monorail in 1961, urging British investment in similar technology to keep pace internationally, while Pooley was monitoring ongoing efforts to build monorails in Paris and Tokyo.[69] A monorail featured in the *Leicester traffic plan* of 1964, and in the design for Washington new town the same year, while the Buchanan report praised monorails amid a discussion of future transit possibilities that included hovercrafts, travelators, chair-lifts, and jet-packs.[70] Another book, *New movement in cities*, set North Bucks New City in an international context, discussing the British project alongside parallel efforts to develop carveyors, minirails, and gondola cars.[71] These possibilities were part of a range of ideas that flourished as the motorways advanced. That is, rather than obviating conversations about novel transport possibilities, the automobile's ascendance stimulated wide-ranging discussions about public transport's new look. In the context of these discussions, while (as we shall see) the monorail's critics eventually carried the day, its boosters argued their case based not only on novelty, but also on cost. Elevated tracks, they noted, were more affordable than underground tunnels, while developments in computers and automation promised further savings by eliminating the need for drivers, ticketing, and traffic controls. Taking these factors into consideration, the feasibility study optimistically concluded that the monorail would ultimately cost less than half of a bus network.[72] So while the monorail was certainly a thrilling prospect – as one booster put it, 'Transport should have DELIGHT' – in the eyes of its advocates it was also a pragmatic one: this 'futuristic' technology, they maintained, represented a tested and affordable option amid a range of possibilities for public transport in the automotive age.[73]

By the end of 1963, it was time to go public. For two years, Pooley's office had been developing its proposal. They were working, as seen, against the backdrop of two larger developments: an expanding population, which required a new city, and the shift towards the car, which required a new kind of city. Their solution – a monorail city for 250,000 people in the county's north – thus emerged in response to broader shifts in the management and movement of civic populations during the mid-twentieth century. North Bucks New City was a product of this moment, and like the later Milton Keynes an attempt to rethink the city for the

[68] Eaton, 'Public transport system study', p. 11.

[69] Sandbrook, *White heat*, p. 55; 'County architect talks to Haddenham on Milton Keynes', *Bucks Herald*, 18 Jan. 1968.

[70] W. K. Smigielski, *Leicester traffic plan: report on traffic and urban policy* (Leicester, 1964); Ministry of transport, *Traffic in towns*, pp. 24–5.

[71] Brian Richards, *New movement in cities* (London, 1966), pp. 26, 28–9.

[72] Eaton, 'Public transport system study', pp. 6, 15–16.

[73] Richards, *New movement in cities*, p. 41.

automotive age. Yet these broad similarities should not obscure the project's particularities, beginning, above all, with the monorail at its centre.

II

In January 1964, Pooley submitted his long-anticipated development review to the county planning committee.[74] At this point, the plan for North Bucks New City became public, inaugurating a new phase in its history. For the next year-and-a-half, Pooley was advocating his city as much as designing it, eager to convey the advantages of the monorail at its centre. These efforts were not helped when Leicester's chief planning officer, Konrad Smigielski, included a monorail in his own city's traffic plan, only for a journalist to claim that he had done so as a 'gimmick' to attract attention to the proposal.[75] The monorail in North Bucks New City, in any case, was no gimmick. It was, rather, an integral part of an anticipated future: one in which men were going to need homes to buy, women were going to need places to shop, and teenagers were going to need something to do.[76]

Pooley understood himself to be working at a pivotal moment in the history of urban planning.[77] While he acknowledged the achievements of Britain's first post-war new towns, he nevertheless numbered himself among their many critics, regretting that their designs had hewn so closely to Victorian ideas. The result, Pooley thought, was 'soul-destroying monotony', and he said that he understood why much of the public had come to view planning as dull, restrictive, and even dictatorial.[78] Pooley wanted North Bucks New City to counter that conception: as he put it, 'Today Jack is as good as his master – let him express that freedom.' 'Freedom', 'choice', 'flexibility', and 'mobility' figured constantly in his thinking and, with these as his lodestars, he believed that North Bucks New City represented a departure in planning – in Britain, to be sure, but also throughout the

[74] 'County of Buckingham [sic] development plan review', discussed in Pooley, *North Bucks New City*, p. 6.

[75] Unidentified newspaper clipping by Terence Bendixson, 'UK news' (c. 1965), CBS, AR 178/1981, NC12A. Smigielski's interest in novel transport possibilities, which included electric rickshaws and moving pavements in addition to the monorail, was not shared by his colleagues on Leicester's planning committee – especially its Conservative chair, Kenneth Bowder, who derided the monorail as a 'laughline'. See Simon Gunn, 'Between modernism and conservation: Konrad Smigielski and the planning of postwar Leicester', in Richard Rodger, ed., *A history of modern Leicester* (Lancaster, forthcoming).

[76] A parallel that similarly placed a transit system at the centre of a broader social vision may be seen in Frank Pick's designs for the London underground: see Michael T. Saler, *The avant-garde in interwar England: medieval modernism and the London underground* (New York, NY, 1999), pp. 92–3, 106–7; on related developments in housing and shopping in the United States, see Lizabeth Cohen, *A consumers' republic: the politics of mass consumption in postwar America* (New York, NY, 2003).

[77] For the broader planning context, which helps to explain the ground shifting beneath Pooley's feet, see Glen O'Hara, *From dreams to disillusionment: economic and social planning in 1960s Britain* (New York, NY, 2007).

[78] The reference to 'soul-destroying monotony' comes from a draft article by Pooley, 'The future metropolis: a new conception' (c. Dec. 1969), paragraph 3, CBS, AR 103/87, 1/11 (MK 11).

world.[79] The variety among his city's townships – each designed by a different architect – would prevent the impression of monotony. Its centralized orientation would sustain the range of choices that affluent shoppers desired. Its 'beads on a string' concept of 'circuit linear development' would allow for variety (among beads) and extensions (of the string). And its monorail would relieve congestion, adding the 'physical' mobility of movement through the city to the 'mental' mobility increasingly provided by radio, televisions, and telephones.[80] So while the plan later came under fire for being too centralized and inflexible, and for failing to take the car sufficiently into account, North Bucks New City was actually planned in response to precisely these criticisms of earlier new towns.[81]

Freedom, choice, flexibility, and mobility figured so prominently in Pooley's thinking because of the widespread expectation that people were soon going to have more time on their hands. 'We are moving into an age of leisure', he explained, 'and one may ask what is the use of a thirty-hour week if there is nothing to do with the spare time?'[82] Designing a city for prospective residents requires planners to peer into the future, extrapolating from present trends to imagine future needs. The planning of North Bucks New City emphasized three such expectations in particular: affluence, automation, and leisure. By contrast with the prior generation of planners, who grappled with the minimum amounts of space, air, and light that urban residents required, the planners of North Bucks New City anticipated an era of abundance, in which the challenge would be to manage not scarcity but plenty.[83] This rise in affluence was understood to be accelerating in the early 1960s as a result of 'automation', a term that only entered British discourse in 1953, but that figured prominently in the government's national economic plan just a dozen years later. Computers, punch-cards, electronic typewriters, closed-circuit televisions, photocopiers, and telex machines seemed poised to transform labour and the workplace, introducing changes as dramatic, some observers suggested, as those that had characterized the industrial

[79] Pooley to J. R. James, 3 June 1964, CBS, AR 178/1981, NC/8. The remainder of this paragraph draws from the 'Interview with Fred Pooley'.

[80] Appendix to 'North Bucks New City: CDA and designation: 2. report', p. 1. The discussion of 'mental mobility' comes from the pamphlet 'Monorails – gimmick or reality?', CBS, AR 178/1981, NC/12A.

[81] For criticisms along these lines, see Clapson et al., *The best laid plans*, p. 10; Beckett, *When the lights went out*, p. 424.

[82] Pooley, 'The "monorail city" explained', *Cubitt Magazine* (c. 1965), CBS, AR 178/1981, NC/18A. This is also the theme of the pamphlet *Planning for leisure* [c. 1962–4], CBS, AR 178/1981, file 'New city in north Bucks' (uncatalogued). Others were even more optimistic, for instance the local journalist who foresaw a twenty-hour week: 'Teaching in the robot age', *Wolverton Express*, 9 Apr. 1965.

[83] Dolly Smith Wilson, 'A new look at the affluent worker: the good working mother in post-war Britain', *Twentieth Century British History*, 17 (2006), pp. 206–29, at p. 217; Wilson notes that, during the three decades after 1945, real household earnings increased 35 per cent, televisions and vacuums entered 90 per cent of British homes, homeownership doubled, and car ownership quadrupled. On the concept of a 'minimum' in architecture, see Dana Simmons, 'Minimal Frenchmen: science and standards of living, 1840–1960' (Ph.D. thesis, Chicago, 2004), ch. 5.

revolution a century before.[84] And this combination of affluence and automation promised a new age of leisure resulting from the thirty-hour week, requiring planners to provide amenities so as to guide future residents in spending their newfound time and money.[85]

These expectations for the future were filtered through assumptions of the present, beginning with imagined identities of the new city's residents. The planners wanted to achieve social diversity in North Bucks New City and, in a shift from earlier discussions of the need to cope with immigration from the commonwealth, they came to understand that goal primarily in terms of class. In addition to skilled workers, then, they hoped to attract a greater share of the professional middle class to their city than had moved to earlier new towns. Private housing would be central to this effort. In 1961, 43 per cent of the British population owned their own homes, and the rate of homeownership in new towns was considerably less than that.[86] Yet Pooley believed that affluence was producing more prospective homeowners, and he wanted to lure them to north Bucks with the promise of attractive homes for purchase. Social diversity along racial lines figured much less prominently in their thinking, even though commonwealth immigration had contributed to the population pressures that initially instigated their planning. But even before the Commonwealth Immigrants Act of 1962 restricted that immigration, the ministry of housing informed the colonial office that new immigrants were unlikely to qualify for the housing and employment schemes that sent skilled workers to new towns.[87] 'Immigration' continued to figure in the planning of North Bucks New City, but – with prospective residents envisioned as skilled workers and professionals, and white in both cases – that term came to refer to the arrival of people from elsewhere in England rather than stations abroad.[88]

Assumptions about the city's residents shaped not only the city's planning, but also its form. Although one pamphlet, 'A city for the 70s', expressed caution about speculating on the mind of the 'ordinary chap', certain assumptions nevertheless seemed reasonable.[89] Married men sought security for their families,

[84] Harrison, *Seeking a role*, pp. 314, 323–4.

[85] On planning for a world of automation and leisure, see Gold, 'The city of the future and the future of the city', p. 96.

[86] Stefan Collini, 'Blahspeak', *London Review of Books*, 8 Apr. 2010, pp. 29–34, at p. 34.

[87] K. Lightfoot (ministry of housing) to M. Z. Terry (colonial office), 21 Jan. 1960, The National Archives, CO1031/3927.

[88] For instance, in the discussion of 'immigration' in the report 'North Bucks New City: CDA and designation: 2. report', p. 2. For the social history of immigration and cities, see Mark Clapson, *Suburban century: social change and urban growth in England and the United States* (New York, NY, 2003).

[89] 'Review of development plan' (1963), appendix 1: 'A city for the 70s', p. 4, CBS, AR 178/1981, NC/7. On shifting ideas about the 'ordinary' English person, see Peter Mandler, *The English national character: the history of an idea from Edmund Burke to Tony Blair* (New Haven, CT, 2006), especially pp. 201–5, 217–18; on the ideological nature of the imagined 'ordinary' person, see Amy Whipple, '"Ordinary people": the cultural origins of popular Thatcherism in Britain, 1964–1979' (Ph.D. thesis, Northwestern University, 2004).

and they also appreciated stable investments. These inclinations, combined with rising prosperity, were rendering them more inclined to buy homes, and thus private housing was to figure prominently in North Bucks New City. Multi-storey, concrete flats had their place: prefabrication meant they could be readily built, and they also offered flexibility (that word again) for families to rent additional rooms as necessary for adolescents, grandparents, and mothers-in-law.[90] But despite the visually striking models that Berrett produced (which, in an effort to depict the scope for variety among housing styles, included landscapes of towers amid parks), he and Pooley believed in the virtues of homes-on-the-ground. Their plans therefore featured three-bedroom homes occupying 648 square feet, each outfitted with patios, gardens, and garages.[91] These spatial priorities meant that fifty townships must occupy a sizable stretch of land (the county eventually designated 22,000 acres, an area about the size of Coventry), while the simultaneous commitment to a congestion-free city centre necessitated a public transit system to move people back and forth. The city's elongated shape thus resulted from these assumptions about its residents: the 'ordinary chaps' calling North Bucks New City home were envisioned as husbands and fathers, middle-aged and middle-class, salaried investors with property and green fingers.

Women in North Bucks New City would in many ways inhabit a city of their own.[92] Pooley considered the impact of affluence on women's lives but, like many observers at the time, he did not fully register the roles women played in creating their families' wealth. By 1961, nearly half of married British women worked outside the home, often part time (thus falling outside many statistical measures).[93] Yet even as their labour took them outside the home, and their wages contributed to rising living standards, commentators continued to associate women with spending and consuming, reaffirming their images as mothers and housewives first.[94] To Pooley, for example, the primary impact of automation on

[90] Evidence of the concrete blocks comes from 'A new city: report number two' (Sept. 1962), and 'A new city: report number three' (Dec. 1962), both of which are held at CBS, AR 178/1981, file 'New city in North Bucks' (uncatalogued). On the 'mother-in-law' problem, see Pooley, *North Bucks New City*, p. 101.

[91] 'The overspill problem in Bucks: a new city?' (Jan. 1962), CBS, AR 178/1981, file 'New city in north Bucks' (uncatalogued).

[92] This paragraph draws from Pooley's letter to Marcella FitzGerald (of *Woman's Mirror* magazine), 14 July 1966, CBS, AR 178/1981, NC/18A; on gender roles during this period, and the pressures that emerged to challenge them, see Sandbrook, *White heat*, pp. 648–64; on women, gender, and the shopping centre in the United States at the same time, see Cohen, *A consumers' republic*, ch. 6.

[93] The precise figure was 45.4 per cent: Wilson, 'The good working mother', p. 209.

[94] Ibid., pp. 226–7. On the longer history of women as consumers and shoppers, see Erika Rappaport, *Shopping for pleasure: women in the making of London's west end* (Princeton, NJ, 2000); on the dependence of the post-war domestic ideal upon immigrant women, and on the relationship between affluence, consumption, and the home more generally, see Wendy Webster, *Imagining home: gender, 'race', and national identity, 1945–1964* (London, 1998); on the less-remarked relationship between masculinity and consumption from the 1950s, see Frank Mort, *Cultures of consumption: masculinities and social space in late twentieth-century Britain* (New York, NY, 1996); and on consumer politics more generally, see Matthew Hilton, *Consumerism in twentieth-century Britain: the search for a historical movement* (Cambridge, 2003).

women's lives would come not at work but in the home, in the form of labour-saving devices that promised more time for family.[95] And since families would be spending more time together, their homes required privacy and comfort, making homes-on-the-ground as important to mothers as to fathers. But echoing his wariness about presupposing the ordinary chap's wishes, Pooley expressed reluctance about speculating on women's desires, emphasizing instead the obligation to provide the 'mobility' and 'choice' to do whatever they might wish – for instance, shopping. Shopping facilities, Pooley maintained, should not devolve to the suburbs, but rather women should be whisked to them in a vibrant city centre. There they could relax, perhaps chat with friends, turning shopping into a daily pleasure rather than a monthly chore. Public transit must be accessible, freeing women from the stress of traffic, as well as from worries about denting the car. Planning could also alleviate their emotional burdens, from the boredom of sprawling suburbs (eliminated by thriving city centres) to worries about children in the street (eliminated by the monorail's elevated track). So for women no less than men, expectations about automation, affluence, and leisure shaped the city's form: their homes required privacy, their shopping required a city centre, and their need to move back and forth required a system of public transport.

Yet that mention of the stresses endured by women – especially in light of the suicide prevention nets that were to run beneath the monorail – points to a darker side of the affluent society on the horizon. Pooley's ideas about the pleasures of the future city echoed his fellow planners, but the attention he paid to the problems of future cities was considerably more distinctive.[96] Suburbs, he believed, inflicted boredom on women and posed dangers to children, both of which resulted from travelling on or across roads, but the future city's greatest threat paradoxically resulted from affluence's greatest gift: leisure. A generation earlier, Corbusier had similarly identified leisure as 'the menace of modern times', and two decades after the war the problems posed by leisure still loomed large.[97] Pooley worried in particular that Britain's education system was not adjusting to the times, remaining geared to teaching children how to work productively, but not relax constructively. The leisure promised by the thirty-hour week thus threatened to produce boredom, loneliness, frustration – even 'delinquency'.[98] This concern about delinquency partly reflected the increased visibility of youth in post-war society: in 1963, there were 800,000 more teenagers in Britain than just ten years before.[99] Social scientists increasingly viewed youth as a distinct

[95] Labour-saving devices that could not come too soon, in the context of broader concerns about over-worked housewives: Joe Moran, *Queuing for beginners: the story of daily life from breakfast to bedtime* (London, 2007), pp. 205–6.

[96] Gold writes that the 'urban problems of the 1960s somehow seem to have been left out of the equation. Poverty, pollution, social inequality and maldistribution of resources rarely figured, apparently abolished by the beneficent powers of technology.' Gold, 'The city of the future and the future of the city', p. 96.

[97] Gold, *The experience of modernism*, pp. 46–7.

[98] *Planning for leisure*; Pooley to H. R. Mallalieu, 15 June 1964, CBS, AR 178/1981, NC/3.

[99] Jonathon Green, *All dressed up: the sixties and the counterculture* (London, 1999), pp. 2–3.

social group, while politicians began worrying about an unsettling new social dynamic, the 'generation gap'.[100] The planning of North Bucks New City unfolded against this backdrop, from 1962 to 1965 – that pregnant moment before the 1960s became the 'sixties', when the Beatles briefly put on suits. In this context, some observers worried that regrettable physical planning might lead to regrettable social outcomes. In 1964, for instance, Nairn visited a housing estate near Bristol. He noticed 'indifferent design, wasted space, no thought and no love', and concluded, 'No wonder there are teddy boys.'[101]

Pooley shared these concerns about social delinquency, but he also welcomed the reverse logic: planning, he maintained, had the ability not only to produce, but also to resolve, 'the frustrations and loneliness of urban living'.[102] He therefore maintained that an appealing built environment, featuring attractive housing and useful amenities, could foster strong social relations, but his most arresting suggestion for preventing delinquency was through the promotion of 'leisure activities pursued commercially' – including, in part, recreational shopping.[103] The contrast with simultaneous developments in the United States is striking: in post-war American suburbs, private shopping centres appealed because they could exclude vagrants and rebels, whereas Pooley was suggesting that the experience of shopping might change them.[104] The New Towns Act of 1946 may have resulted from an inquiry by John Reith, the BBC's retired director-general famous for his commitment to cultural uplift, but less than two decades later the planning of North Bucks New City testified to a profound cultural shift. More than theatres, libraries, or concert halls, it was the shopping centre that promised to function as the key social institution in the coming age of leisure. This was true not only for women and adolescents, but indeed the entire family, as Pooley anticipated a time when 'the family shopping expedition may become a pleasure'.[105] The pamphlet *Planning for leisure* identified six amenities that cities could provide to manage the problems of leisure, including recreational space, homes-on-the-ground, and a thriving city centre, and atop the list stood 'a free public transport system'.[106]

Indeed, far from a 'gimmick', the monorail was integral to every part of this vision. It was the monorail that promised to take fathers out of traffic, mothers out of the home, and children off the streets.[107] This imagined monorail future offers

[100] Catherine Ellis, 'The younger generation: the Labour party and the 1959 youth commission', *Journal of British Studies*, 41 (2002), pp. 199–231; idem, 'No hammock for the idle: the Conservative party, "youth", and the welfare state in the 1960s', *Twentieth Century British History*, 16 (2005), pp. 441–70; Lawrence Black, 'The lost world of young conservatism', *Historical Journal*, 51 (2008), pp. 991–1024, all of which are discussed in Jordanna Bailkin, *The afterlife of empire* (Berkeley, CA, forthcoming), ch. 2.

[101] Nairn, *Your England revisited* (London, 1964), p. 77, quoted in David Matless, *Landscape and Englishness* (London, 1998), p. 246. See also Judt, *Postwar*, p. 388.

[102] *Planning for leisure.*

[103] Ibid.; Pooley, 'The "monorail city" explained'.

[104] Cohen, *A consumers' republic*, pp. 265, 267; Corbusier similarly explored the possibilities of social control through consumerism, as Chris Ealham notes in *Class, conflict, and culture in Barcelona, 1898–1937* (New York, NY, 2005), p. 81.

[105] *Planning for leisure.*

[106] Ibid.

[107] Pooley, 'The future metropolis: a new conception', paragraph 14.

insight into Britain's 1960s present, when affluence promised abundance and automation promised leisure. Yet these increasingly liberated urbanites, flush with time and money, could still be located culturally through inherited gender norms: men were ordinary chaps, translating affluence into property, while women were housewives, their energies spent shopping. One demographic, however, was increasingly – and worryingly – evident: teenagers so unprepared for leisure that they threatened the peace. But even that alarming prospect could be managed by the right urban planning, at the core of which the monorail promised to join the freedom of mobility with the security of fixity.

III

There was nothing inevitable about the defeat of the monorail metropolis, and nothing natural about the establishment of a motor city in its place. Rather, the shift from North Bucks New City to Milton Keynes resulted from a temporary alignment of political forces, intellectual trends, and personal networks. Identical factors propelled Pooley's plan past local obstacles before 1965, only for the landscape to shift towards Milton Keynes thereafter. The decisive moment came between 1965 and 1968, before the oil crises and environmental campaigns of the following decade, and (not coincidentally) a period when planning trends were increasingly emphasizing the dispersal of residents and amenities.[108] Yet even as these factors were conspiring to thwart Pooley's vision, the largest ambitions driving that vision became ever more evident. These ambitions extended well beyond Buckinghamshire, and indeed beyond Britain: North Bucks New City was intended to secure Britain's place at the forefront of the world's urban future.

In May 1964, Buckinghamshire county council formally approved the development review that included the proposal for North Bucks New City. The plan cleared another hurdle in November, when the council announced that, pending consultation with local areas, they intended to designate 22,000 acres for the new city. Scores of meetings followed, both public and private, during which not a single council formally objected to the plan.[109] Meanwhile, the proposal was attracting enormous public attention. One writer claimed that it 'immediately caught the imagination of the public', lauding it as 'a revolutionary plan with strong Wellsian overtones'.[110] Nairn praised Pooley's 'city of the future', calling it the 'most adventurous and imaginative scheme in Britain'.[111] A local toy store created a model of the city, built out of Lego and displayed in its storefront.[112]

[108] Gold, 'The city of the future and the future of the city', p. 94; idem, *The practice of modernism*, pp. 248–56.

[109] Pooley, *North Bucks New City*, pp. 6, 10. Eleven councils responded favourably, three registered concerns, and two submitted no response: 'Observations received on draft policy statement', CBS, AR 178/1981, NC/1.

[110] Sharpe, 'A city for the 70s'.

[111] Nairn, 'The best in Britain'. On 'subtopia', see Ian Nairn, 'Counter-attack against subtopia', *Architectural Review* 120 (1956), republished as Ian Nairn, ed., *Counter-attack against subtopia* (London, 1957).

[112] Neal's Stores to Pooley, 22 Feb. 1965, CBS, AR 178/1981, NC/20.

Not all the responses were positive: a bus company warned of the many problems with monorails, while a candidate for a local council suggested that surplus Londoners be shipped to Australia rather than north Bucks.[113] And while no councils objected to the plan, the National Farmers Union protested the pending loss of agricultural land.[114] But then Richard Crossman, minister of housing, seemed to issue a key endorsement in January 1965, when he went on television and declared the prospect of a new city near Bletchley 'a magnificent concept'.[115] After more than three years, North Bucks New City appeared within reach.

During the next five months, however, the project unravelled rapidly. Crossman, still new to his job, soon learned that the ministry valued new towns because they were centralized projects, not local initiatives. Indeed, in the view of Evelyn Sharp, his ministry's formidable permanent secretary, 'The fact that they can get on with their job without consulting public opinion is the great thing in their favour.'[116] Sharp, along with her deputy, J. D. Jones, and chief planner, Jimmy James, mounted a devastating counterattack against the upstarts in Aylesbury, culminating in a pivotal meeting in London on 11 May 1965. Pooley anticipated trouble – 'I know there is an uneasy feeling about the monorail', he confided – and he was correct to worry, as he, Berrett, and the other county representatives encountered a barrage of hostile questions upon their visit to the ministry.[117] Was current thinking not moving away from concentrated centres? Had other cities not found monorails prohibitively expensive? Would a bus network not be both more affordable and flexible than a monorail? And would cities in the future even need public transport? These were honest disagreements, and the Buckinghamshire men responded gamely, citing the Buchanan report to challenge the viability of building ever more roads. But it was one thing to come up with answers, and another to come up with money.[118] In the days following this meeting, Buckinghamshire county council begrudgingly concluded that it could not finance the project alone, at which point they had no choice but to put their independent proposal on hold.[119] Crossman immediately pounced, announcing that the county's inability to pay for its scheme meant that the ministry would be appointing a development corporation of its own. It was at that moment

[113] United Counties Omnibus Company to Pooley, 10 Feb. 1964, CBS, AR 178/1981, NC/12A; 'Votes cast for the anti-city man', *Wolverton Express*, 9 Apr. 1965.

[114] Concerns about the National Farmers Union are evident in the county's internal correspondence, for instance R. C. Horwood to Stanley A. Comben, 24 Jan. 1964, CBS, AR 178/1981, NC/3.

[115] CBS, AR 178/1981, NC/8.

[116] Crossman further explained that Sharp treasured the 'completely autocratic constitution of the corporations, which we finance and whose members we appoint'. Richard Crossman, *The diaries of a cabinet minister*, I: *1964–1966* (New York, NY, 1975), p. 127. See also Suge, 'The nature of decision-making in the post-war new towns policy'.

[117] Pooley to Millard, 27 Apr. 1965, CBS, AR 178/1981, NC/8.

[118] 'Notes of a meeting held at the ministry of housing and local government on 11th May, 1965', CBS, AR 178/1981, NC/8.

[119] Pooley, *North Bucks New City*, p. 10.

that the county's plan for North Bucks New City became replaced by the ministry's plan for a new city in north Bucks.[120]

Several years later, with the planning of Milton Keynes underway, Pooley lamented that the proposals under consideration seemed unlikely to produce a rival to Brasília.[121] Brazil's striking new capital figured prominently in planning discussions at the time, not least for the way that its highways accommodated the private car. In Newcastle, for instance, the city council leader T. Dan Smith, along with his chief planning officer Wilfred Burns, promulgated a vision of Newcastle as the 'Brasília of the north'; it is not surprising, given that touchstone, that their 1963 plan for a redeveloped Newcastle included ambitious motorway schemes.[122] Pooley's reference to Brasília, however, is more curious, since the monorail at the heart of his city was intended not to facilitate the car, but to render it unnecessary. And the differences hardly stop there: Brasília was designed as a national capital, whereas North Bucks New City was designed as a regional centre; Brasília's chief architect described its housing blocks as 'filing cabinets for humans', whereas the Buckinghamshire planners remained committed to homes-on-the-ground.[123] The most important difference between the two cities, however, was that Brasília got built: designated in 1956, it was inaugurated in 1960, whereas North Bucks New City was shelved four years after its planning had begun.

Pooley's wistful reference to Brasília should be understood less as a description than an ambition, one that helps to situate his thinking within a larger nationalist urbanism.[124] By no means did developments in planning and architecture at the time respect national borders, but they nevertheless could be shaped by national ambitions.[125] Brasília's planners and promoters, for example, viewed their project as an opportunity to thrust Brazil into a new and better future. They were harnessing urban planning to national pride, and – albeit on a different scale – identical ambitions informed the planning of North Bucks New City. As Pooley explained at the conclusion of the many public lectures he delivered,

[120] 'Notes on meeting with minister of housing and local government (Mr. R. Crossman, M. P.) at Whitehall – 20th May 1965', CBS, AR 178/1981, NC/8.

[121] CBS, AR 178/1981, box 'Planning dept files', file 'Milton Keynes: reports of consultants'.

[122] John Pendlebury, 'Alas Smith and Burns? conservation in Newcastle upon Tyne city centre, 1959–1968', *Planning Perspectives*, 16 (2001), pp. 115–41, especially pp. 116, 119–22. On the discursive legacy of Brasília after its inauguration, see Williams, 'Brasília after Brasília', *Progress in Planning*, 67 (2007), pp. 301–66.

[123] The 'filing cabinets' reference comes from an unidentified clipping by Reg Trotter, 'People and cities' (Jan. 1964), CBS, AR 178/1981, NC/14; an infinitely more nuanced, though still ultimately critical, portrait of Brasília is James Holston, *The modernist city: an anthropological critique of Brasília* (Chicago, IL, 1989).

[124] For discussions of other such projects, see David L. A. Gordon, ed., *Planning twentieth-century capital cities* (London, 2006). If contemporaries made the initial connection between Brasília and North Bucks New City, scholars continue to find the parallel illuminating: for instance, Williams, *The anxious city*, p. 58.

[125] As Whyte neatly puts it, 'England, it was clear, could [by 1957] claim to possess a genuinely national International Style.' Whyte, 'The Englishness of English architecture', p. 465.

'The people whose environment we would change … and indeed history itself, might be inclined to say that the decade in which we pulled down Smokeville [and] Drearyville, and replaced them with bright new towns … was indeed one in which we really modernised Britain.'[126] By replacing nineteenth-century industrial cities ('Smokeville') and twentieth-century suburbs ('Drearyville') with a glamorous monorail city, North Bucks New City promised to create not only a better Buckinghamshire, but a more modern Britain.

These patriotic ambitions were fuelled by the enormous attention the project was attracting from abroad. Transit agencies wrote to Aylesbury from Canada, the United States, Australia, and Japan, as did city councils from Pontiac, Hartford, Canberra, Copenhagen, Paris – even Lower Hutt, New Zealand.[127] North American academics were particularly interested, writing from Penn, Columbia, MIT, Illinois, Northwestern, and Yale, as well as from the universities of Alberta and Montreal.[128] These inquiries generally expressed admiration for the project and requested further information, but a number also sought jobs: applicants wrote from Paris, Hamburg, Stockholm, New York, Berkeley, Honolulu, Calgary, Montreal, Hartford, Melbourne, and Canberra – to name just a few.[129] European architecture journals paid attention, from *Der Aufbau* in Austria to *Urbanistica* in Italy, and a French research institute designed a *ville lineaire* based on the plan for North Bucks New City.[130] Information moved along commonwealth networks as well: India's commerce department requested further information, while the planners of a Pakistani new town inquired whether the monorail would continue to function during the monsoon season.[131] Pooley delighted in the attention, and did his best to encourage it. He considered inviting a Canadian architect to design a township, to facilitate exchanges between their countries; he sought information from companies and municipalities from San Francisco to Switzerland; and he and Berrett arranged visits to engineering firms in Cologne and Paris.[132] The point is not that the world's eyes were fixed on Aylesbury, but rather that the plan for North Bucks New City immediately entered a global economy of ideas about future cities.

Pooley, after all, had designed not simply a city, but a city of the future, which explains why his proposal echoed the futurism of contemporary world's fairs. World's fairs had a long history of showcasing innovations in architecture, transportation, and planning: at Chicago in 1893, for example, the architect

[126] Pooley to the Coventry Society of Architects, February 1966, CBS, AR 178/1981, NC/20/ii.

[127] CBS, AR 178/1981, NC/12A; CBS, AR 178/1981, NC/27.

[128] CBS, AR 178/1981, NC/19.

[129] CBS, AR 178/1981, NC/1.

[130] John-Han Kirnig to Pooley, 1 Nov. 1965, CBS, AR 178/1981, NC/18A; Emilio Tempia to Pooley, 4 Nov. 1965, CBS, AR 178/1981, NC/18A; M. A. Aggett to Pooley, 4 Nov. 1966, CBS, AR 178/1981, NC/11.

[131] S. K. Basu to Pooley, 22 Dec. 1964, CBS, AR 178/1981, NC/21; J. D. Tetlow to Pooley, 18 Mar. 1965, CBS, AR 178/1981, NC/12B.

[132] Pooley, 'A city for the 1970s' (Oct. 1964), CBS, AR 178/1981, file 'New city in north Bucks' (uncatalogued); CBS, AR 178/1981, NC/12A.

Louis Sullivan designed the transportation building to showcase the latest developments in railway transit and comfort.[133] Urban planning took on particular significance in the fairs coinciding with post-1945 urban reconstruction, which were themselves inflected with many of the themes that shaped the planning of North Bucks New City. For example, the first official post-war fair, Brussels in 1957, displayed a future of affluence, leisure, and – at the American pavilion, with its hourly fashion shows – shopping.[134] Five years later, Seattle's 'world of tomorrow' exhibition imagined mass car ownership, but featured a working monorail, as did New York in 1964–5, Montreal in 1967, and Osaka in 1970.[135] The stretch from 1964 to 1970 marked the heyday of the post-war fair, as Montreal's nearly fifty-five million visitors in 1967 made it the first exhibition to surpass Paris in 1900.[136] The planning of Montreal's fair proceeded simultaneously with that of North Bucks New City, the master plans of both being published in 1964.[137] Pooley described the shopping centre in North Bucks New City as 'a gigantic modern Crystal Palace' (home to the first world's exhibition in 1851), and Berrett reported back about a monorail at the Lausanne exhibition in 1964.[138] In 1966, they visited a British engineering company that specialized in transport innovations, such as moving pavements and carveyors, and that company's literature cited as precedents for their designs the fairs at Paris in 1900, Wembley in 1924–5, and Lausanne in 1964.[139] After their visit, Pooley sent a note to their hosts: 'It was particularly worthwhile', he wrote, 'to find how close is our outlook on the problems of urban transport'.[140] The ideas animating North Bucks New City were thus part of a more extensive discourse, especially (though not exclusively) evident at the era's world's fairs, which sought to harness novel transport technologies to the longstanding project of building an improved urban future.

North Bucks New City was thus a British project with global co-ordinates. It bespoke a certain modesty, cautiously imagining the ordinary chap's needs, referring to its neighbourhood units as 'townships', 'parishes', or 'villages', and pledging that no home would be more than a seven-minute walk from a park.[141] Yet there was nothing modest about the network of pedestrian decks throughout its city centre, nor about its monorail, as attested to by those letters from Europe, East Asia, South Asia, Australasia, and North America. Pooley welcomed the

[133] Anna Jackson, *Expo: international expositions, 1851–2010* (London, 2008), pp. 51, 102–3.

[134] Ibid., p. 112.

[135] John R. Gold and Margaret M. Gold, *Cities of culture: staging international festivals and the urban agenda, 1851–2000* (Burlington, 2005), pp. 108–11, 133.

[136] Ibid., p. 106.

[137] Ibid., p. 119.

[138] 'The overspill problem in Bucks: a new city?'; Pooley to Burgi, n.d., CBS, AR 178/1981, NC/12A.

[139] D. L. Turner, 'The "never stop" and all that – a fresh approach to city transport' (c. 1965), CBS, AR 178/1981, NC/12B.

[140] Pooley to L. R. Blake, 14 Feb. 1966, CBS, AR 178/1981, NC/12B.

[141] Marking the transcript of the 'Interview with Fred Pooley', Pooley crossed through two references to 'townships', replacing them with 'parish' and 'large villages'.

attention, alerting local editors to the global attention the plan was attracting; and he frequently reciprocated – initiating, for instance, a correspondence with the director of an American company who had expressed his ambition of making trains as common as elevators.[142] Coventry's building consultant sent Pooley a copy of a lecture that discussed British new towns alongside Mexico City, Los Angeles, Stockholm, Rotterdam, and Brasília, and Pooley noted another lecture in London that discussed North Bucks New City in relation to Corbusier's plan for Algiers.[143] And when the ministry of housing, and later Milton Keynes Development Corporation, declared the monorail impractical, Pooley countered their arguments by pointing to the working monorail in Germany, as well as to the efforts to build new lines in Japan and France.[144] At such moments, he lamented, Britain's innovations in planning and transport seemed to be recognized more elsewhere than at home.[145]

Pooley did not, however, merely want to participate in an international conversation: he wanted to assert Britain's leadership within it. He insisted that Britain was not, as too many commentators suggested, spent as a nation, but rather that it still had the capacity – and, in urban planning, the opportunity – to lead internationally. 'I am absolutely browned-off with listening to people abroad saying we are done for', he declared. 'This city would give us the opportunity to show that we can still lead in the building world.'[146] He repeatedly reiterated versions of this argument: Britain's building industry was more than up to the job; the project could secure Britain's leadership in transport design; and the ultimate result would be not just a new city, but a new Britain.[147] 'If we really believe in modernising Britain', he pleaded, 'let us make sure that the large capital investment projects … look ahead to tomorrow.'[148] Friendly press coverage duly adopted these themes: one enthusiastic columnist opened with the reminder that the British 'traditionally win the last battle', before fingering the car as the nation's next unfortunate enemy.[149] This insertion of nationalist ambitions into international projects could produce some dissonance: one sympathetic editor said that he wanted to endorse Pooley's plan, apart from the monorail which struck him as too German.[150] Generally, however, what mattered in these discussions was not the national character of the technology, but the national

[142] Pooley to C. McGlashan, 4 June 1965, CBS, AR 178/1981, NC/18A; Pooley to Robert Sommerville, 7 June 1966, CBS, AR 178/1981, NC/12B.

[143] Trotter, 'People and cities', CBS, AR 178/1981, NC/14; William Holford, 'The built environment: its creation, motivations, and control', 24 Nov. 1964, CBS, AR 178/1981, NC/19.

[144] 'County architect talks to Haddenham on Milton Keynes'.

[145] Pooley to Kirnig, 24 Feb. 1967, CBS, AR 103/87 1/12 (MK12).

[146] Pooley to George Lothian, 11 Dec. 1964, CBS, AR 178/1981, NC/14.

[147] Pooley to Parkinson, 3 June 1965, CBS, AR 178/1981, NC/14; Pooley to H. R. Mallalieu, 2 Nov. 1965, CBS, AR 178/1981, NC/12A.

[148] 'Interview with Fred Pooley'.

[149] Sharpe, 'A city for the 70s'.

[150] Alec Forrest to Pooley, 15 Dec. 1969, CBS, AR 103/87 1/11 (MK11); Pooley obliged with 'The future city: a new conception', which considered (but ultimately, on grounds of cost, rejected) the possibility of an underground as well as the monorail.

stature it promised. It was this sentiment that Parkinson echoed in Edinburgh, and that Buchanan endorsed at the end of *Traffic in towns*: 'Recreating the urban environment in a vigorous and lively way', Buchanan concluded, 'could do more than anything else to make [Britain] the most exciting country in the world.'[151] The planning of North Bucks New City was thus part of a larger project in post-war – and, increasingly after 1956, post-imperial – Britain, one that pursued renewed global stature by building on the nation's urban history.[152]

Even after the council shelved the plan in May 1965, Pooley continued to advocate on its behalf for another three years. In the summer of 1965, he endured further meetings with the sceptics in the ministry.[153] Since they argued their case against the monorail based primarily on cost, he urged a firm to deliver a monorail at half-price.[154] That effort yielded nothing, however, while the ministry's planning proceeded: they drafted a designation order in April 1966, hosted a public inquiry in July, and formally designated Milton Keynes in January 1967.[155] The day-to-day work now shifted to the Milton Keynes Development Corporation, appointed by the minister and chaired by the businessman, Jock Campbell. Pooley took a seat as one of the county's representatives and used that position to continue making his case. On one occasion, for instance, he visited the chairman at his home; Campbell was suffering from the flu, but Pooley nevertheless perched on the edge of his bed and extolled the monorail's virtues.[156] The county's other representatives, notably Ralph Verney, similarly lobbied Campbell, but soon they learned that the chairman already favoured the decentralized approach advocated by the firm of Llewelyn-Davies Weeks Forestier-Walker & Bor.[157] Llewelyn-Davies et al. had won the 1967 competition to oversee the planning of Milton Keynes and, in subsequent debates within the Development Corporation, they enjoyed two major advantages: their co-founder, Richard Llewelyn-Davies, had been friends with Campbell for years, and both men favoured the flexible, car-friendly, decentralized approach that resonated with larger trends during the late 1960s. Pooley had been battling long odds since the county council relinquished its control in 1965, but the forces now arrayed against him were simply overwhelming. In October 1968, after weeks of discussion failed to produce any converts, Pooley finally acknowledged the monorail's defeat.[158]

[151] Ministry of transport, *Traffic in towns*, p. 201.

[152] Mandler remarks upon the re-ordering of ideas about British modernity around its urban history in 'New towns for old', p. 221.

[153] 'Notes of a meeting held at the ministry of housing and local government on 27th July, 1965', CBS, AR 178/1981, NC/8.

[154] Pooley to Blake, 28 July 1966, CBS, AR 178/1981, NC/12B.

[155] 'Report of the inquiry into the draft of the north Buckinghamshire new town' (Aug. 1966), Milton Keynes library, L 060:71.

[156] Interview with Lord Campbell of Eskan (1985), *The new towns record.*

[157] Ibid.

[158] Bendixson and Platt, *Milton Keynes*, p. 65.

By this point, still two years before construction would begin, the city emerging on paper was in many ways the very opposite of North Bucks New City. Rather than maintaining a concentrated city centre, Milton Keynes adopted the principle of radical decentralization; rather than forestalling the car by putting up a monorail, Milton Keynes embraced the car by laying down roads; and rather than viewing American cities as lessons to avoid, Milton Keynes took them as models to follow.[159] Despite these fundamental differences, however, Milton Keynes was no less international in orientation than its defeated precursor. But rather than a Brasília in north Bucks, this new city of the future would be a little Los Angeles.[160]

IV

This article has followed the monorail through an imagined urban future that never came to pass. The journey has moved through a world of menacing motor cars, automated workplaces, thirty-hour weeks, ordinary chaps, leisured housewives, social delinquents, satisfied shoppers, a rejuvenated Britain, and, ultimately, grateful refugees from the likes of Smokeville and Drearyville. This vision, like the monorail at its centre, was simultaneously progressive and conservative: progressive because it imagined coming ways of living, conservative because it sought to manage them along familiar lines. In this anticipated future, amid a rapidly changing present, men went to work, women went shopping, and Britain led the world, and even the dramatic urban setting where it all transpired promised continuity with the past. After all, the monorail city re-imagined urban transport but not urban living, which was to remain concentrated around a centre and accessible by train. Indeed, looking forward from the 1960s, rather than backward from today, a truly futuristic city would rethink its inherited forms: rather than a concentrated centre, it would disperse city services; rather than tracks for a train, it would build roads for the car; and rather than a monorail, it would deploy a fleet of buses. When the planners of Milton Keynes 'demolished' North Bucks New City in committee, they did so not to derail the city of the future, but rather to build it.

But before Milton Keynes, there was North Bucks New City, and this recovery of its history carries implications for two larger narratives: the history of urban planning, and the history of the 1960s. North Bucks New City fits awkwardly into

[159] On Pooley's reluctance to replicate 'a typical American city', see Bendixson and Platt, *Milton Keynes*, p. 63.

[160] On Milton Keynes and Los Angeles, see Clapson, *A social history of Milton Keynes*, pp. 2, 19, 40; on Milton Keynes and the avant-garde, see Derek Walker, *The architecture and planning of Milton Keynes* (London, 1982); for a brief, but rich, discussion of ideas about mobility and freedom in Los Angeles, see Patrick Joyce, *The rule of freedom: liberalism and the modern city* (New York, NY, 2003), pp. 242–4, as well as Gold on 'non-plan' in *The practice of modernism*, pp. 254–6. With *The architecture of four ecologies*, Banham emerged as the most significant theorist of Los Angeles: see Edward Dimendberg, 'The kinetic icon: Reyner Banham on Los Angeles as mobile metropolis', *Urban History*, 33 (2006), pp. 106–25.

histories organized around the rise and fall of 'modernism'. This article has avoided that term, finding it triply problematic: invoked as a slogan by both participants and critics, it collapses disparate trends together while marginalizing still others.[161] Attempts to track the fate of modernism often hinge on a shift from the 1960s heyday of professional hubris, concrete towers, and road construction towards the 1980s reversion to popular taste, vernacular styles, and historic preservation.[162] Yet Pooley cannot easily be assimilated into that framework: he criticized planning as inflexible, even as he planned a city around a fixed monorail; he included towers of flats made from prefabricated concrete, even as he preferred homes-on-the-ground featuring vernacular touches; and he acknowledged the inevitability of a future of cars, even as he sought to make cars unnecessary in his own future city. North Bucks New City thus falls on every side of dichotomies and narratives that are organized around the fortunes of modernism. One response to that finding might offer to refine the term's meaning, for instance by claiming to have revealed a more supple modernism, but it has to be said that the histories of architecture and planning are already cluttered with such pronouncements.[163] The point is not to deny the significance of ideas about modernism, or to insist that they bore no relation to North Bucks New City, merely to point out that the term's very adaptability compromises its explanatory power, and to suggest that its perpetual redefinition offers diminishing returns. Rather than revising that protean concept, this article has instead set it aside, arguing by example that the untidy history is at least as significant as – and certainly more revealing than – definitional discussions about the concept that would organize it.

Attention to that full range of ideas is especially important in studying the recent past. The historiographical debate about the 1960s has recently become organized around a presentist version of the question of continuity-versus-change. Historians who plump for *continuities* look to elements of the present that emerged before the 1960s, while historians who emphasize *change* look to elements of the present that emerged during the 1960s.[164] These are important questions, and this is an important debate, but the full story of that era (no less than any other) is one of paths not taken as much as those that were, while a debate organized around

[161] For a critical analysis of the term 'modernity' and its variants, see Frederick Cooper, *Colonialism in question: theory, knowledge, history* (Berkeley, CA, 2005), pp. 113–49; for an argument against the uncritical adoption of historical actors' categories, see Guy Ortolano, *The two cultures controversy: science, literature, and cultural politics in postwar Britain* (Cambridge, 2009), pp. 8–9.

[162] Harrison, *Seeking a role*, pp. 146–64; Judt, *Postwar*, pp. 385–9; Sandbrook, *White heat*, pp. 585–604.

[163] As Sarah Williams Goldhagen shows with respect to modernism in architecture, these refinements themselves now boast a half-century of history; but by seeking to recast modernism as a discourse rather than a style, Goldhagen's article ultimately offers yet another instalment in that tradition: Goldhagen, 'Something to talk about: modernism, discourse, style', *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians*, 64 (2005), pp. 144–67.

[164] Sandbrook frames the debate in these terms in *Never had it so good: a history of Britain from Suez to the Beatles* (London, 2005), in which he contrasts his approach with Arthur Marwick's emphasis on rupture: *The sixties: cultural revolution in Britain, France, Italy, and the United States, c. 1958 – c. 1974* (New York, NY, 1998).

these terms marginalizes the significance of disappointed ambitions that were no less part of the past. The cost is an understanding of the politics and processes by which possibilities that were not inevitable became (or failed to become) realized, and if urban history illustrates this problem, Pooley's history offers a way out. There is a subtle teleology at work when historians focus upon cities that were built: a whiggish selectivity favouring realized ideas, akin to tracking 'truth' through the history of science or 'liberty' through the history of politics, when what emerged in each case was produced through engagement with ideas that were subsequently discarded. We have seen this dynamic at work in the case of Milton Keynes, which emerged when, where, and how it did not as the unfolding of a ministry's plan, but rather through a contested process that included North Bucks New City. The story of North Bucks New City is significant in part because it disrupts this teleology, revealing a history that includes unrealized departures alongside built achievements, even if they can now only be glimpsed from the monorail's window (see Figure 3).

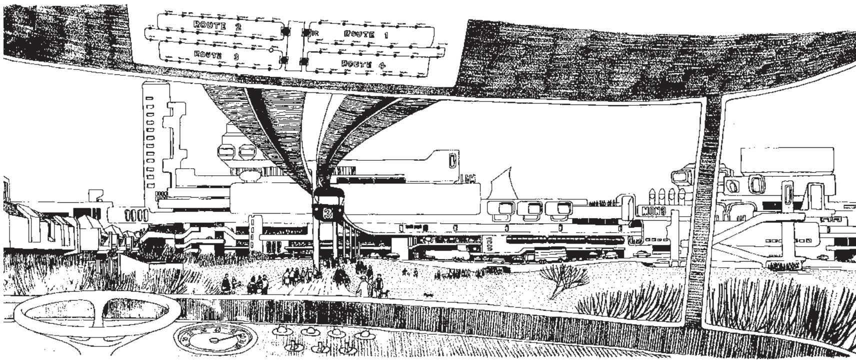

Fig. 3. The view from the monorail. Drawing by Bill Berrett. Reproduced by permission of the Centre for Buckinghamshire Studies.