

How did the government attempt to solve problems created by industrialisation in the 19th Century?

Problems caused by Industrialisation

The Industrial Revolution saw Britain lead the world in revolutionising manufacturing, and for a while it became known as the 'Workshop of the World'. However, this rapid industrialisation, and the sharp rise in population that accompanied it, also led to significant urbanisation around manufacturing and mining centres. By the time of the 1851 census, nearly half of Britain's population lived in towns, compared to just one in ten people a hundred years earlier. Living conditions for working people were terrible. Many lived in poorly built, overcrowded tenements, with limited access to sanitation, relying on shared public facilities in their area.

Waterborne diseases like cholera killed thousands of people in epidemics from the 1830s to the 1860s, whilst typhoid killed large numbers of people during the 1890s. In Maidstone, Kent, 1,800 people out of a population of 34,000 were killed in 1897–8. Other diseases thrived in these environments. Tuberculosis, a respiratory disease, spread quickly in the overcrowded conditions amongst people whose lungs were already weakened with damp and smoke-filled air. Rickets, a disease which affects the development of bones, became more common because of a lack of vitamin D in the diet and lack of exposure to sunlight. It was so widespread in British towns that it became known internationally as the 'English Disease'.

By the start of the twentieth century, it was clear that poverty and poor living conditions were having a severe impact on public health. In 1900, infant mortality rates (deaths before the age of one) in Britain stood at 150 per 1,000 live births. The poor health of working people was highlighted during the Boer War (1899–1902) when one third of British men who volunteered to fight were considered medically unfit for military service.

The role of Reformers in improving living conditions in the 19th Century

More came to be known about the extent and causes of poverty because of the work of social investigators such as Charles Booth, writing in *Life and Labour of the People* (1889), and Seebohm Rowntree, writing in his *Study in Poverty* (1901). They wrote about the struggles faced by the poor and highlighted how terrible living conditions contributed to poor health.

Edwin Chadwick played a key role in getting the government to take more responsibility for improving public health. Although he believed in the miasma theory (a belief that wrongly attributed disease to bad air), his work helped explain the connection between poor living conditions and disease and encouraged reform. His work on the 1839 Royal Commission resulted in the 1842 Report on the Sanitary Conditions of the Labouring Population of Great Britain, which recommended that Parliament should pass laws to get local councils to improve sanitation, paid for by local taxes.

Meanwhile, individual entrepreneurs and philanthropists tried to find their own solutions to these problems. Some factory owners had realised that they could get more work from their employees and increase productivity if they improved workers' living conditions. They chose to build decent housing for their workers:

- Robert Owen built New Lanark in the 1830s as a model industrial village for his workers, and others followed.

- Titus Salt built Saltaire in West Yorkshire in the 1850s.
- John Lever began work on Port Sunlight on the Wirral in 1888.
- George Cadbury built Bournville in the West Midlands from 1896

Government Acts and Laws

As a result of the Edwin Chadwick's report the 1848 Public Health Act was introduced which was a step towards improving living conditions. The Act allowed, but did not force, local councils to set up boards of health to investigate problems and recommend solutions. Within a decade, over 180 towns had set up their own boards. However, because local authorities were under no obligation to act on their findings, there were few improvements to begin with. Later laws, like the 1875 Public Health Act, would force local authorities to provide sewers and drains. In the same year, the Artisans Dwellings Act meant local councils were given the power to demolish slums. By 1900, there had been significant progress, but there were still slums in many of Britain's towns and cities.

Ebenezer Howard and Garden Cities

There had been attempts in the 19th century to improve towns, for example in 1888 John Lever began work on **Port Sunlight** in the Wirral. Port Sunlight had 800 houses for a population of 3500 and had allotments, schools, a hospital, a swimming pool and a temperance hotel; profits from the factory were shared back into the village. In 1902, two young architects from Derbyshire called Barry Parker and Raymond Unwin were employed by the Rowntree family after the publication of the Study in Poverty to build cottages for the Rowntree workers. They designed **New Earswick**, a model village near York, a job they completed before they began work in Letchworth. However, unlike other projects where the factory was built first and housing for the workers followed, in **Letchworth** it would be houses first and then the factories.

Ebenezer Howard published his blueprint for garden cities in 1898. It was **called Tomorrow – a Peaceful Path to Real Reform**, but was renamed **Garden Cities of Tomorrow** when it was republished in 1902. Howard was a parliamentary reporter. Earlier in his life, he had worked in the US city of **Chicago**, where he saw the terrible living conditions created by this city's rapid growth and the severe shortage of housing. When he returned to England, he had noticed similar, and in some cases, more extreme problems in British towns and cities.

Having listened to MPs debate the issue of slum housing on multiple occasions, Howard was unconvinced they knew how to solve the problem. He identified **problems** not just in towns, but also in the countryside, and thought that they were connected. Towns were divided: wealthier areas had suburbs, theatres, libraries and parks, whilst the working-class lived in overcrowded and unsanitary slums. Meanwhile, in the countryside, cheap food was being imported into Britain from abroad which made farming unprofitable. This drove an **increasing number of people to move from the countryside into the towns**, adding to the problem of overcrowding.

Ebenezer Howard developed an idea to solve both the problems of urban slums and rural poverty. His solution was the garden city concept, based around **three 'magnets'**, which combined the best parts of life in towns and in the countryside to transform town planning. The garden city would mix green spaces with the housing and amenities of a working town. To make it affordable to ordinary people, a **Garden City Company** would own the land the town was built on and they would keep rents as low as possible. Any profits made by the company would be spent on facilities for the community. Shareholders would be paid a very limited amount on their investment.

Politically, this concept had wide support. Conservatives supported it as a private business, Labour supported it as the town would look after the people that lived there, and the Liberals supported it as it would modernise how land was used in the countryside.

Letchworth was chosen to be the location for the first attempt to build a garden city based around Howard's design.

What were the features of Letchworth Garden City?

Old Letchworth

People have lived in Letchworth since at least **700 BCE**, when it began as a **Bronze Age fort**. It is mentioned in the **Domesday Book of 1086** as “Leceworde” and had only **nine households** at the time. The name comes from Old English and means **a farm surrounded by a fence**.

Modern Letchworth grew from **three small villages**: Willian, Norton and Letchworth. In 1901, Willian had about **300 people**, Norton had **150**, and Letchworth had fewer than **100**. Each village had its own **church**, built soon after the Norman Conquest in the **12th century**.

Before the Garden City was built, Letchworth was a **small rural area** with a few houses, a church and a medieval hall. Most people worked as **farm labourers** and travelled by **horse and cart**. Although a railway ran through the area, there was **no station**.

In **1903**, the Alington Estate (which included Letchworth) was chosen as one of three possible sites for the **first Garden City**, based on the ideas of **Ebenezer Howard**. The other sites were in Essex. Howard wanted to create towns that helped people escape poor living conditions in London while still having jobs and good transport links.

Although only **two Garden Cities** were built in Britain, Howard’s ideas have had a **long-lasting influence** on town planning.

Howard explained his ideas in his book *Garden Cities of To-morrow*. He believed towns could combine the **best parts of town life** (jobs and services) with the **best parts of countryside life** (space and fresh air). He showed this idea using his **Three Magnets diagram**.

A Garden City would be carefully planned:

- A **central park** would be used for community events like farmers’ markets.
- **Homes and shops** would spread out from the centre.
- A **main avenue** would include schools, churches and green spaces.
- **Factories** would be built around the edge of the town.
- A **green belt** of farmland would surround the town and prevent it from growing too large.

Each Garden City was planned to have a maximum of **32,000 people**. If more housing was needed, another Garden City would be built nearby.

Housing in Letchworth

The company **First Garden City Ltd** began building Letchworth in 1903. Architects **Barry Parker and Raymond Unwin** designed the town. The first houses were built in **1904**, and families moved in that same year.

Different types of housing were built:

- **Small workers' cottages** a short walk away from industrial areas. The first ones were built near to **Norton Common** by **Picton and Hope**. **The Alpha Cottages** on **Baldock Road** were among the first built.
- **Larger houses** for middle-class residents closer to the old Letchworth village.

Affordable housing was difficult to provide, so the **1905 Cheap Cottages Exhibition** showed homes that could be sold for **less than £150** which was cheaper than the first cottages built in Letchworth which sold for **£160**. By **1914**, over **1,000 workers' houses** had been built by several companies; including **Garden City Tenants Limited** who built **300** affordable workers' cottages, **Letchworth Cottages** and the **Howard Cottage Society**.

Transport Links

Good transport was essential to the Garden City idea. Letchworth was about **30 miles north of London** and already had strong transport links so was an ideal location. The **Great Northern Railway** passed through the town and the **Great North Road** (later the A1) ran nearby

As soon as plans for the Garden City were put in place, sheds began to appear along the railway line to store the materials and house the workers who would be needed for the building of new roads and drains, as well as pipes for water and gas supplies. Letchworth's factories would eventually be built along the railway line, taking advantage of the ease to transport goods. A temporary railway station opened in **1903**, followed by a permanent wooden one in **1905**. In the same year 35,000 people bought cheap day return tickets from London to see the new town, and some decided to move there. The current station was built in **1912** in the **Arts and Crafts style**, it had four platforms, two of which were in use by passengers. Letchworth is home to the **first roundabout in the UK**, called **Sollershott Circus**, built in **1909**. It was inspired by a famous roundabout in Paris. It was designed to make roads safer, even though there were very few cars at the time. The term "**roundabout**" began to be used in the 1920s.

The Temperance Movement

Many people in Letchworth supported the **temperance movement**, which encouraged people not to drink alcohol. This movement was supported by religious groups - Primitive Methodist chapel was built on Broadway and Howgills, the Quaker Meeting House opened; and factory owners, who believed alcohol caused poverty and poor behaviour.

In **1907**, local residents voted on whether alcohol should be sold in the town. **54% voted against it**. As a result, alcohol was restricted, although some pubs still existed. One example was the **Skittles Inn**, which did not sell alcohol but became an important **community meeting place** for events like dances and meetings. This does not mean that the people of Letchworth did not drink alcohol. The public houses in Norton (the Three Horseshoes) and Willian (The Fox) that had existed before the Garden City continued their business and benefitted from providing alcohol to people who were not able to buy any in Letchworth itself. Public houses in nearby Hitchin and Baldock also benefitted.

How did Letchworth Garden City change over time?

Year	Information
1914-1918	The First World War interrupted building of new housing in Letchworth.
1920	The Spirella corset factory was completed and opened. The Spirella building provided the perfect environment for workers to be happy, contented and highly productive, and was worthy of being called the 'Factory of Beauty.'
1925	The Skittles Inn became the Settlement, an adult education centre.
1920s	Houses continued to be built in Letchworth with more workers cottages being built in the east, and larger houses for the middle classes in the west.
1932	Sollershott Circus had signs added to the roundabout to indicate traffic should keep to the left. When it was first built as a 'traffic circle' in 1909 there were very few cars, and they could go round whichever way they chose.
1936	The Broadway Cinema was opened.
1940	A new pub called the Wilbury inn was built just outside the city limits which highlighted that a ban on alcohol did not stop the residents seeking it elsewhere.
1945	Letchworth became part of projects designed to deal with 'London overspill' – people who could no longer be housed in London. Land was bought from the First Garden City Limited company by Letchworth Urban District Council to build council estates to provide rental houses for London's workers.
Post 1945	Housing to be bought by families, rather than rented to workers, also continued to be built after the war, although this happened a lot more slowly as the government focused on rented council housing. Post-war rationing also meant that there were restrictions on which building materials were available until 1954. These new private estates were built to the south of the town centre.
1947	Work began on the Grange Housing Estate to the north of the town centre.
1957	The ban on alcohol was lifted in Letchworth after a public vote.
1959	The Jackmans housing estate was started to the southeast of the town centre. It was built to a design inspired by Radburn, New Jersey, USA, where houses were built with greenspaces and a path separating them to cut down on traffic, with roads and garages built behind houses for cars. Today this is one of the poorest neighbourhoods in Hertfordshire.
1962	The Broadway House opened; it was first licensed pub to sell alcohol in Letchworth. More pubs have opened since, but Letchworth still has a smaller than average number.
1963	Ownership of Letchworth was passed from First Garden Limited to the Letchworth Garden City Corporation.
1973	Letchworth Garden City Corporation was making enough of a profit that it could properly invest in the amenities of the town.
1970s	The private Lordship and Manor Park housing estates were built – these are wealthier than the Grange and Jackmans estates.
1980	Standalone Farm, a working tourist attraction farm was opened.
1982	North Herts Leisure Centre was opened
1984	The Ernest Gardiner Hospital was opened.
1995	Ownership of Letchworth Garden City was passed to the Letchworth Garden City Heritage Foundation.
2016	Broadway Cinema was reopened as Broadway Cinema and Theatre. It is run by Letchworth Garden City Heritage Foundation.

Why is Letchworth Garden City significant?

The world's first Garden City

Letchworth is the world's first Garden City, founded on the principles laid down in **Ebenezer Howard's** 1898 book. Howard's book describes a vision of a town balanced between housing and green public spaces, where people could live healthily, away from the problems of overcrowding and poor sanitation in the industrial towns. According to Howard's plan, the garden city would only be allowed to grow to 32,000 people before a new site would be found for the next garden city. Construction of the garden city at Letchworth began in **1903**.

Philanthropists such as the **Lever** and **Cadbury** families got behind Howard's vision immediately, raising enough money by 1899 to create the **Garden Cities Association** to promote the idea. This attracted the interest of several MPs, the London City Council, and even the writer George Bernard Shaw. By **1902**, the new **Garden City Pioneer Company** raised enough money to buy the Alington Estate, Letchworth, with the help of funds from Lever and Cadbury. In 1903, the **First Garden City Limited was established** and raised £300,000 to begin building. Letchworth was followed in 1920 by nearby **Welwyn Garden City**. However, this was to be the final UK garden city as changing priorities in town planning. This changed in part because Howard's disciples, Frederic Osborn and Patrick Geddes, adapted the ideas into broader urban development strategies, especially the **New Town** movement that dominated housebuilding in Britain after the Second World War.

Influence on the New Town Movement

Although only two garden cities were built in the UK, the Garden City Movement significantly influenced urban planning and housing policy. Even before the first house had been built in Letchworth, the Garden City Concept could be seen influencing town planning when Henry Vivian, a follower of Ebenezer Howard, started Brentham Garden Suburb in London in 1901. Hampstead Garden Suburb was built from 1906 based on designs by Parker and Unwin, the architects of Letchworth. Other followers of Ebenezer Howard, including Patrick Geddes and Frederic Osborn, were involved in developing government policies on town planning between the two world wars.

After the Second World War, the Labour Government decided to build 'New Towns' to rehouse people whose homes had been destroyed in the Blitz as well as those whose houses were being demolished as part of slum clearance programmes. The first of these 'New Towns' was Stevenage, near Letchworth, which was started in the 1940s. The last being Milton Keynes, finished in the 1970s. New Towns were planned and built by Development Corporations, just like the First Garden City Limited that was responsible for Letchworth. There were other similarities which included: the involvement of the community in important planning decisions, well built houses that were value for money, healthy environments with lots of green open spaces, shopping and recreational facilities, as well as a transport network that separated pedestrians and cars. The Garden City Concept can also be seen in modern plans. Prime Minister Gordon Brown unveiled plans to build 'eco-towns' in 2007. In 2014, the Confederation of British Industry – which represents UK businesses asked for more new towns and garden cities to help solve the UK's housing crisis. That same year, the Letchworth Declaration was made by the New Garden Cities Alliance to encourage the building of more garden cities. In 2024, the UK government planned to build 'garden villages' built around green spaces to help solve housing issues.

Influence beyond Britain

As soon as Ebenezer Howard's book *To-Morrow: A Peaceful Path to Real Reform* was published in 1898 it sold very well, not only in Britain but across the British Empire and beyond. By 1902, it had sold so many copies it was reprinted with a new title *Garden Cities of To-Morrow*. Even Lenin, the Russian communist leader was said to have visited in 1907. According to the Garden City Museum in Letchworth, there are towns influenced by

Howard's garden city idea on every continent on the planet, apart from Antarctica. These are some of the towns inspired by the garden city concept:

- Europe: Suresnes (France), Hellerau (Germany) and Nova Kakhovka (Ukraine)
- Canada: Grand Falls (Newfoundland and Labrador), Powell River (British Columbia)
- USA: Radburn (New Jersey), Forest Hills (New York)

There were also towns inspired by the garden city idea in South America, Africa and Asia.

Influence on open countryside and the green belt

A key part of the Garden City Concept was the idea of the green belt, where there is land in the countryside that cannot be built on so as to preserve it. The greenbelt was intended to separate garden cities from the original towns and cities like London, and from other garden cities. It was also intended to protect farming in the area, while garden cities would provide somewhere for agricultural workers to live. The term green belt was first used as a planning aim by Raymond Unwin, one of Letchworth's architects, in the 1920s. The green belt became part of town planning in designs for London after the 1938 Green Belt (London and Home Counties) Act, and it was written into the 1947 Town and Country Planning Act, which required builders to get planning permission for their projects. By this point, with the rapid growth of existing towns and the building of new ones, the concept was more important than it had ever been in the past to preserve the countryside. In 1955, the government minister Duncan Sandys encouraged local councils to clearly define areas they believed should have the protection of being green belt. By the 1980s, green belts covered 15% of all of the land in Britain and it remains a very important part of Britain's planning system.

Change in governance

The First Garden City Limited company was founded in 1903 to raise the money to build Letchworth Garden City. Profits from the value of land or the sale of houses were paid into the Common Good Fund to pay for community projects. After the Second World War, profits grew rapidly. By 1963, First Garden City Limited had been taken over by Hotel York, a private company. It started to sell off freehold plots of land to private buyers. This resulted in Parliament passing the 1963 Letchworth Garden City Act which gave ownership of the estate to the new public company, the Letchworth Garden City Corporation, to make sure that profits were still going to the community. By the 1970s, this meant around £300,000 a year in profits was being spent on the town. In 1995 the Letchworth Garden City Corporation was replaced by the Letchworth Garden City Heritage Foundation. This followed on from a decision in the 1970s to have Letchworth designated as a heritage conservation area, using powers given to the local council by the 1967 Civil Amenities Act. The Foundation continues to manage Letchworth, managing both the town's property and landscape.

Letchworth's governance at a local level has changed over time. Once Letchworth Garden City started to be built the people who moved there formed their own unofficial council. As the town grew, Letchworth Parish Council was established in 1908, which became Letchworth Urban District Council in 1919. From 1974, North Hertfordshire District Council, took overall responsibility for local government in the area. Letchworth did briefly have a town council again between 2005 and 2013, but local residents thought that with the Heritage Foundation, the District Council and the County Council there were too many layers of local government. Letchworth remains an unusual place for local government as it has the same county and urban councils as other parts of the country, but it also has the company element from the original Garden City as well. When Letchworth was founded, the company controlled most of town planning, but as new planning laws were passed after the Second World War, town planning became more the responsibility of the local council.

	Question	Answer
1	What was the name of the association set up to promote Garden cities?	
2	What was the name of the Garden City built in 1920?	
3	What happened to the Garden City movement after this?	
4	Name two garden suburbs.	
5	When were 'New Towns' built?	
6	Name a 'New Town'.	
7	How were 'New Towns' influenced by Letchworth Garden City?	
8	What are eco - towns?	
9	Who planned to build eco towns?	
10	How do eco towns link to Letchworth Garden City?	
11	What did the UK government plan to build in 2024?	
12	Where did Howard's book sell copies?	
13	What leader visited Letchworth in 1907?	
14	Name other towns around the world based on Howard's Garden City concept.	
15	What was the purpose of a green belt?	
16	Who first used the term green belt?	
17	When did greenbelts become part of town planning?	
18.	What did the 1947 Town and County Act say planners must do?	
19.	How much land in Britain did greenbelts cover by the 1980s?	
20.	How do greenbelts show the significance of Letchworth Garden City?	
21.	What happened to profits from the First Garden City Ltd?	
22.	What did Hotel York do when they took over First Garden Ltd?	
23.	What did the 1963 Letchworth Garden City Act state?	
24.	How much was being spent on Letchworth in the 1930s?	
25.	Who replaced the Letchworth Garden City Corporation in 1995?	
26.	How did the governance of Letchworth at a local level change over time?	

Question 6 (a) Describe the main features of Letchworth Garden City that improved living conditions (8 marks)

Extended writing – I, We, You

Aim to write three paragraphs – the only skill you need to use is describe. You need to describe the reasons in depth using subject specific vocabulary – the examiners want to read your answer and think ‘wow that’s specific’. Focus each paragraph on one feature

The features you could include are: Garden city principles; Housing; Temperance movement; Transport; Governance; Employment

Step 1: ‘I’ Worked Example

Read through this example and highlight:

One feature of Letchworth Garden City designed to improve living conditions was the housing. It was founded in 1903 and designed according to the ideas of Ebenezer Howard. Housing was carefully planned to improve the living conditions and avoid the overcrowding seen in industrial cities. The housing was planned by architects Barry Parker and Raymond Unwin. The first houses were built in 1904 and workers moved in that year. There were two types of housing initially. Small workers’ cottages were located a short walk away from industrial areas. The first ones were built near to Norton Common by Picton and Hope. Larger houses for middle-class residents were built closer to the old Letchworth village. By 1914, over 1,000 workers’ houses had been built by several companies; including Garden City Tenants Limited who built 300 affordable workers’ cottages, Letchworth Cottages and the Howard Cottage Society. After World War Two council housing was built in Letchworth to house families as well as workers. The first of these estates was the Grange housing estate to the north of the town centre. In 1959 the Jackmans housing estate began to be built, this had green spaces and paths separating houses to reduce the amount of traffic.

The word crowded housing:

Use of detail/subject specific vocabulary e.g. dates, names, locations.

Step 2: ‘We’ Joint Answer

Together we will write/plan this answer using your whiteboards. You will write your ideas on the whiteboards and then complete this section after discussing it as class.

Another feature designed to improve living conditions in Letchworth was the governance of the town.

Step 3: ‘You’

On your own describe another feature designed to improve living conditions in Letchworth.

Question 2: Explain why Letchworth Garden City was significant in showing changes in town planning. [12]

Extended writing – I, We, You

In this question you need to explain why Letchworth Garden City was significant in showing changes in town planning – you must refer to the second half of the 20th century and show the significance on places outside of Letchworth.

Introduction:

Letchworth Garden City was significant in showing changes in town planning. It led to the building of another garden city nearby (Welwyn Garden City). After World War Two it had a significant influence on the building of the new towns. Letchworth heavily influenced the greenbelt movement. Letchworth also had an influence on a number of places outside of the UK, including Forest Hills in New York.

Step 1: 'I' Worked Example

Read through this example and highlight:

Letchworth Garden City was significant because it was the first practical example of Ebenezer Howard's Garden City idea, which aimed to combine the benefits of town and countryside while avoiding overcrowding, pollution, and poor housing. Founded in 1903, Letchworth showed that towns could be carefully planned with green spaces, low-density housing, separate industrial areas, and good transport links, which led to later garden villages such as Welwyn Garden City. After the Second World War, its success strongly shaped the UK government's approach to rebuilding and tackling housing shortages caused by World War Two. This led to the New Towns programme from 1946. Post-war new towns like Stevenage and Milton Keynes adopted key ideas first tested at Letchworth, including planned layouts, self-contained communities, green belts and access to jobs and services, making Letchworth a model for modern town planning in Britain. This influence continued into the 21st century when the garden city concept led to Gordon Brown's plans to build eco towns, this shows the continued significance of Letchworth Garden City in town planning.

Key words/details/dates:

Causal connectives:

Link to town planning beyond

Letchworth

Step 2: 'We' Joint Answer

Together we will write/plan this answer using your whiteboards. You will write your ideas on the whiteboards and then complete this section after discussing it as class.

Another way in which Letchworth Garden City was significant in showing changes in town planning was its influence on the open countryside and greenbelt.