

The Post War New Towns

The New Towns Act of 1946 was inspired by the success of Welwyn Garden City. To cope with war damage and poor housing stock in London, the Greater London Plan of 1944 (Abercrombie Plan) was produced. This developed into the New Towns Movement: a ring of garden city type new towns around London.

Hertfordshire had 4 of these:

Stevenage (dubbed Silkingrad by local protesters after the then government minister, Lewis Silkin)

Hemel Hempstead

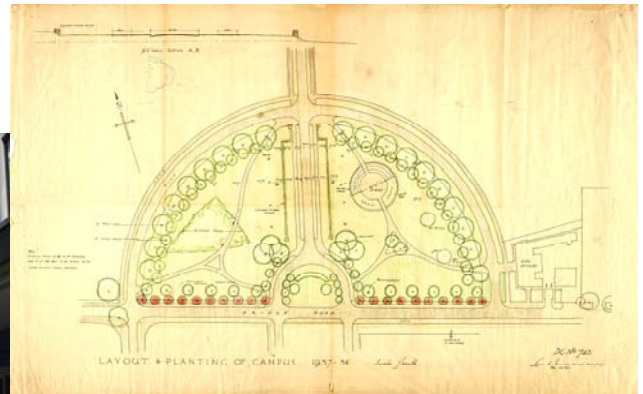
Welwyn Garden City New Town

Hatfield New Town

They adopted the concept of city centre gardens. Whilst Welwyn Garden City has a grand processional avenue influenced by the City Beautiful Movement of the early 20th century, the new towns were more modest in their gardens.



Stevenage Town Centre 2011



Layout and planting of Welwyn Garden City Campus 1938-9
Hertfordshire Archives and Local Studies



Hemel Water Gardens c.1990s with canalised river Gade. Town centre is to the right behind tall blocks

Hemel Hempstead had the Serpent water garden by Geoffrey Jellicoe (now under Lottery-funded restoration). Although an important and influential design, it is parallel to, rather than part of the town centre



Stevenage opted for a similar arrangement with the garden behind the town centre



Stevenage Gardens, post -restoration in 2011. Town centre is in the background