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The best laid plans...

needed in the next 20 years will go has become the subject of hot debate. Nigel Moor reviews

lifestyles. Just how these houses can be accommodated has become the subject of much debate as a host of organisations publish reports in an attempt to influence the planning agenda. As more reports appear, the confusion increases as to how many new homes will be required,

issue came from the Town and Country Planning Association which, together with the Joseph Rowntree Foundation, has published its regional inquiry into housing need and provision in England. Its title, *The People: Where Will They Go?*, recalls the question posed by planning guru Ebenezer Howard a century ago.

The report was edited by two well-known planning experts, Professors Michael Breheny and Peter Hall, and is clearly an attempt to influence the agenda for environment secretary [illegible]

Breheny and Hall's most controversial conclusion is that [illegible] policies promoting [illegible] industrial sites have been successful to the point where 50% of housing development is currently on reused "brownfield" land, the average in years to come is likely to fall short of government targets by reaching only 30-40%.

This is a challenge to the government's [illegible]

July, the government re-emphasises its 50% target set in the housing white paper, *Our Future Homes*. On this basis, government statisticians calculate the amount of land in urban use would increase by only 6800 ha a year to 2016.

Other conclusions in the TCPA's report seem to be at odds with the government's predictions and point to potential

demand for new housing in the

yet the largest reserves of brownfield land are east along the river Thames and in the capital itself.

development land in the North-west is available in Manchester and Liverpool, but the greatest demand for housing is in [illegible] and rural Lancashire

sites are in South Yorkshire.

Professor Hall concludes: "The major challenge for planning in the UK during the next decade will be to balance the increase in demand for new homes against the continuing need for environmental protection. The aim

terms of their transport requirements

as well as siting and construction."

I searched in vain through the report for strong empirical evidence to support these conclusions. What I found was [illegible] anecdotal evidence based on the views of

hardly amounts to rigorous research on which to assess and question government policy. The reuse of brownfield sites for development, not just for housing but for associated employment, leisure and community development, is such a central plank of the government's policy

The TCPA's report highlights another major issue on which the experts seem to be at loggerheads. Where will the demand for new homes be greatest?

Much of the projected increase in households is forecast for the conurbations of London and 34% in the big cities of the North and the Midlands. Only a 26% increase is predicted for the remaining

counties. That the figures are so heavily

mainly a result of the migration assumptions made by the population forecasters: much of the inward migration from outside the UK goes to London, while the level of migration out of the cities of the Midlands and the North has been revised downwards.

"portfolio" of different solutions. Likely ingredients include:

- extensions around the edge of towns and cities
- in-filling of vacant sites in existing urban areas
- [illegible]

rail corridors.

The reuse of brownfield sites for development ... is such a central plank of the government's policy for sustainable development that the issue must be tested much more vigorously

What is missing from this analysis is any examination of the political hurdles that must be overcome [illegible] approach is to s[illegible]

housebuilders and developers spent [illegible] new villages and settlements. They have little to show for their investment. Even in London, where the greatest increase in new households is forecast, there is [illegible] development can be planned.

The debate has only just begun, but a [illegible] with major problems – contamination, poor access, weak demand, high costs – are subsidised. Regeneration agency English Partnerships has recently gained a new chief executive, but it also needs a [illegible] target from government if the brownfield target is to be met.

Nigel Moor is managing director of RPS Nigel Moor: The Planning Consultancy.