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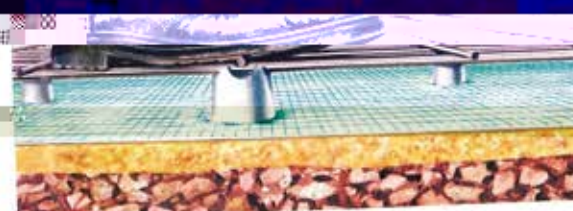
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needed in the next 20 years will go has become the subject of hot debate. Nigel Moor reviews

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 Commission, which together with the Joseph

Kornrumpf 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 Brebny and Peter Hall, and is clearly an attempt to influence the agenda for environment secretary

Brebny and Hall's most controversial conclusion is that brownfield 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

July, the government re-emphasises its 50% target set in the housing white paper, *Our Future Homes*. On this basis, government statisticians calculate that 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

development for new housing in the 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 new housing is in rural Lancashire

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

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

as well as siting and construction." I searched in vain through the report for strong empirical evidence to support the case for brownfield sites. What I found was 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 conurbation of London and 34% in the big cities of the North and the Midlands. Only a 26%

development of urban brownfield sites can be improved with major problems - contamination, poor access, weak ownership, high costs - are subsidised. Regeneration agency English Partnerships has recently gained a new chief executive, but it also needs a new chief executive, but it also needs a target to be met. Nigel Moor is managing director of RPS Nigel

counties. That the figures are so heavily skewed to the south-east is a reflection of 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.

increase in demand for new homes against the continuing need for environmental protection. The aim is to create a "portfolio" of different solutions. Likely ingredients include: extensions around the edge of towns and cities in-filling of vacant sites in existing urban areas

rail corridors.

What is missing from the analysis is any examination of the political hurdles that must be overcome. The approach is to spend housebuilders and developers spend

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

The debate has only just begun, but a

Nigel Moor is managing director of RPS Nigel