

New towns or just more houses?

Even if the government reduced legal migration and stops illegal through its policing of the gangs the U.K. population is likely to continue to expand quickly from migration over the next five years as during the last 20 years.

This means the government needs to get to its target of 300,000 new homes a year, which is stretching.

The government has floated the idea of establishing new towns or cities to achieve this new higher target. It has yet to identify where and how these will be established. Previous new towns were pioneered by New Town Corporations charged with assembling land and granting planning permission. Public money or guarantees were used to get it going, by harnessing large amounts of private capital and ending up with plenty of private ownership. Milton Keynes was one of the later examples.

At the recent peak rate of 750,000 additional people coming to live here you would need to build 3 Southamptons a year. This has not been happening and is impossible. There is discussion of building 3 or 4 new towns over a period of years. They could be near Bristol, York and Oxford. There is Labour pressure for a new town between Oxford and Cambridge along the improved east-west rail line being put in between them.

If they want to do this they will need to speed up the process and legislate to give them planning override and control of the area designated.

I would be interested in your thoughts on what is a realistic level of migration. Are new towns a good idea? Where should they be located? Is it right to override current planning controls and local opposition to large scale development?