

VERNON

*“a lighthouse tower and sailing boats  
moored inside a broad green harbour “*

*“This is a suburb as a working town.  
A town whose primary business is housing”.*

*“one fifth of the GMSF allocation for the Stockport  
Area”*

## Vernon Garden Village: a new town near Stockport

Submitted to GMSF Stockport consultation area. 16 January 2017

© David Chandler. BA. MA. MA.

[poligonale1234@gmail.com](mailto:poligonale1234@gmail.com)

07854 915171

Urbanist

### Introduction. A Walk in the Park.....

From Woodbank Park, a high escarpment runs across the edge of the park scoured out by the course of the river Goyt on its way into Stockport. The river was here long before the town. The creation of the town has made the river function like a visitor entering then leaving, when after all the town is the recent visitor, the settler. Used as solvent for at least five hundred years to power mills on the bends in its course, as diluent and as hydraulic machine, to be drunk as beer, to carry waste as a vehicle, always arriving clean and leaving dirty with threads of the excreted industrial urban taking it to the sea at Liverpool. It made money and it took money away. Now it sits inside the small forest as a habitat for small animals and never quite free from the lingering scars and chemical stains on its banks, its weirs and its channel sides.



Woodbank becomes Vernon Park (1858) at the iron railings and it is not by chance that the great mansion on the hill announces it. Social class graded the buildings of Stockport. The wild hill edge now accedes to enclosure and the planning that is the default of the English Victorian Public Park. The philanthropist industrialist continues to rule the recreation of the visitors who step lighter because they are guests and this is protected landscape;

*'for the purpose of public walks and as a place for outdoor exercise'*



Beyond this boundary, all nature is groomed and trimmed either to guide visitor progress or to declare a functional use with bowling greens, planting of rare botanical species, grottoes, benches and a bandstand. Like a gigantic buffet table all is signposted and framed.



The descent through the unfolding tiers of garden pleasures is organised into levels of genteel challenge; slopes or steps. All zoned. Gaps in the planting conspire to deny the presence of an industrial town to the west. On the descent a piece of waste ground across the wall that flanks New Zealand Road conveys an impression of further connected heathland that extends to Stockport. A little illusion of a far off oasis, put beyond reach but still a meadow that frames the park apron.



Great Pear mill appears through the trees as the park levels out to the edge as it meets Stockport Road West but the park continues rolling downhill under its iron fence to a stand of trees still growing out of the grass with no asphalt pavement. A rare natural verge, as if the intention might once have been to let the park cover the road and for there to be no road at all on this boundary.

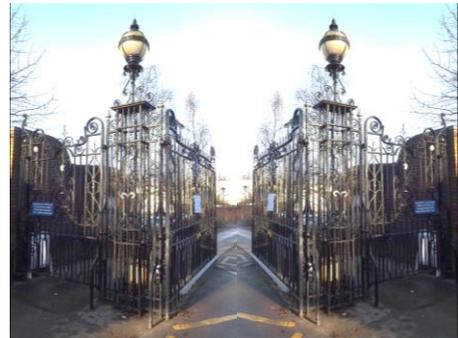


*The fringe of Vernon Park on New Bridge Lane looking East. Anticipates the greening of New Bridge lane. Below the gates at the Gas Board facility. These will also lead to the largest residential block (450 dwellings) overlooking the Goyt river bend)*

The horizontal zigzag of the paths of Vernon Park has given way to a vertical alley and park gates on both sides of the road. Another sign that the aristocratic imprint on this area persists. Wrought iron gates and globe lanterns preserved at the entrance to the British Gas facility seem to announce a stage melodrama abruptly cancelled by the reality of plain industrial walls of the gas offices nearby. Neoclassical pattern now meets the universal need for the gas that now flows all through Stockport like another liquid river.

The newly enclosed section of New Bridge Lane will carry Vernon Park into Vernon New Town. Carpeted with a grass, cycle and pedestrian paths and an electric

bus route. The Gas Board gates will become park gates once again.



*New Bridge Lane as a pedestrian and cycle lane. Vernon Park at left.*

# Vernon Garden Village: a new town near Stockport.

**A happy, green, densely populated, smart, sustainable, and resilient community**

3800 dwellings for GMSF. (One fifth of the Stockport allocation).

## SITE PANORAMA DOCUMENTS



*The site of Vernon Garden Village looking South from the elevated M60 slip road of Crookilley Way (collage composite photo). The landmarks of Pear Mill Welkin Mill and the gas board mast at right are clearly visible. Vernon Park and the woodland of the Goyt Valley present a 3 square mile basin of countryside environment and recreational offer. Prior developments to left and right are terminated on elevated brows that permit Vernon to build in density. The tallest block is 15 stories (2 of them retail and services) with only 9 stories revealed above the gradient of Crookilley Way. The site requires flood defences and the management of electricity pylons, levels and drainage. Crookilley Way is less affected by idling traffic and this part of the M60 is not configured as a congestion pinch point so the emissions are not excessive.*



*Welkin Way from Stockport Road West*



*Welkin Way with Welkin Mill in the distance*



*Welkin Way with Welkin Mill in the distance with the tree line of Crookilley Way on the horizon*



*The VERNON site 20.51 hectares.  
Plan courtesy of James Dyson  
architect.*

*Below: Lower Bredbury / Welkin  
Mill (VGV) sites compared:  
identical scale imposed on M60  
roundabout splay at Bredbury*

The site is green belt and occupied in pockets that have no demonstrable economic connection: a row of light



industrial properties, sports pitches, the Gas Board offices on the bend of the Goyt River, several allotments and Welkin Mill. The latter currently used as a kitchen appliance auction house but fortified heavily against its isolated

position with razor wire and fencing that place restrictions to the motorway fringe parkland. Large pylons take power from the electrical plant at the nearby Pear Mill. The entire site is unlit and Welkin Way is surfaced for most of its length. It is used for occasional daytime activities especially horse riding running and dog walking. Some fly tipping in places.



*Beneath Crookilley Way and the M60 the important pedestrian tunnel is in need of attention to make it a pedestrian access to Warth Meadow, Brinnington and the protected Reddish Country Park to the North*



For GMSF. 16 January 2016. © David Chandler;  
urban communication  
pollygonale1234@gmail.com

## VERNON: GARDEN VILLAGE

(Formerly Lower Bredbury)

Stockport MBC

site 20.51 hectares

**Density:** 3800 dwellings. Retail social, educational, administrative and work places incorporated into the 15 proposed blocks. Electrical pylons re-sited, flooding risk embanked. 3000 new trees planted. Welkin Way to Welkin Mill is re-drawn as town axis. M60 and Crookilley way underpass restored and frame by residential arch block. Motorway emissions shielded by barrier of tall, sealed curving structures.

**Green:** Private motor vehicles excluded; strictly pedestrian priority. Allotments, solar panels, extensive roof planting, water, waste and power recycling. Countryside hub to Reddish Country Park and Goyt/Vernon and Woodbank green spaces. Sports pitch, Tennis cycling and motor scramble mini tracks, skateboard park and 3 children's play grounds. Health and fitness tracks and outdoor gyms and private gyms.

**Resilient:** flood protected, well supported by routes to Stockport and Bredbury and Manchester Airport using proposed A6 tramway. Responsive to changes in borough and the Vernon site. Low maintenance river walks and border areas. Child centred and safe. Family oasis. Aspirational and protective environment.

**Smart:** digitally connected and administrated, responsive power-saving residential blocks for heating, light and maintenance. Pollution monitors and air filtration. Delivery sharing and synergised weekly activities on Vernon noticeboards.

Like Port Sunlight and Letchworth Vernon is a place that the world will visit to learn about urban living in the 21st century.



*VERNON NEW TOWN (Lower Bredbury) looking from North to South. Welkin Mill and Crookilley Way at the base of the diagram. 15 residential structures and an off-site car park. A new residential block covers the cemetery plot at St Pauls Street, Portwood. Yellow dotted line streets closed private car ownership with pedestrian priority and public transport lanes. Open yellow arrows suggest new pedestrian bridges and access points. Black dotted lines mark boundaries to areas to be left unbuilt. The design places a type of circular lighthouse tower block at the entrance and all the blocks are intended to be seen as sailing boats moored inside a broad green harbour.*

## Why a new town or Garden Village?

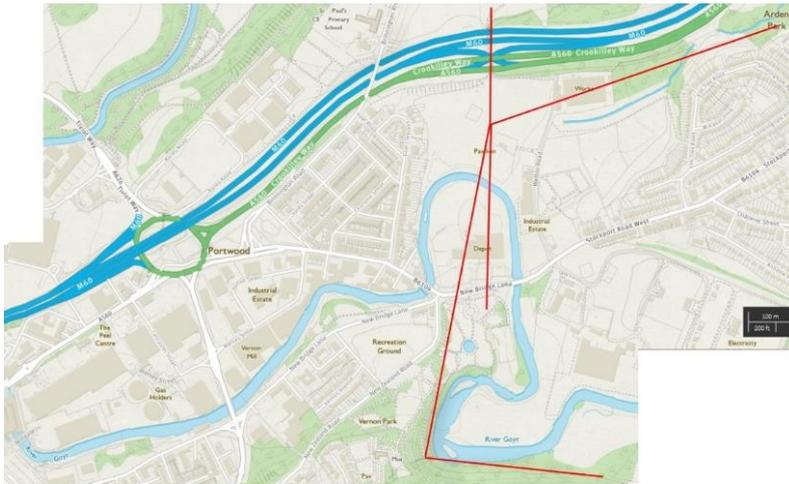
A traditional town has always constructed a distinct pedestrian space, town squares and pedestrian spaces. Motor vehicle connectivity is usually interrupted by a town's central civic spaces. This usually forms an island around which the traffic will circulate differently from the ring roads and connecting roads. Vernon is just such an town island. Without that central spatial oasis the town will be only exist as a ribbon as in Hazel Grove or Longsight. A name only. These two examples have surrendered control of their surrounding residential boundaries and amenities as they only function as embankments for a road system. They lost boundaries and with them, any strong economic or social identity.

### A utopian urban vision for the GMSF

This opportunity is rare and a radical innovation in the future of planning in post Brexit UK. A model for European urban design. The concept proposed here at Vernon New Town is best equated to a fully inclusive holiday island resort. A residential Centre Parc. A 21<sup>st</sup> century digitised Port Sunlight. A town inside the park. A campus style super village of 3800 dwellings of different sizes and formats. No building denoted in terms of class. No superior quality block or impoverished block. No substandard social zone. A place to enjoy living in and bringing up a family and growing old in, a fully inclusive oasis with its own constitution and aspects of its own management and governance. A town manager and council should regulate the town from the floors of the "Lighthouse" drum tower situated at Vernon Park Bridge. A town hall / gate house for the new millennium community plantation. For the loss of their cars, the residents will get priority access to Vernon Park and the recreation space which will accrue as a result of the part closure of New Zealand Road. Riverside restaurants will flourish in the new pedestrian environment on the area currently left empty North of the Gas Board offices, as the River Goyt and its wildlife is uncovered as a recreation asset. A series of restaurants on the large riverside wooded bend will become a social hub. More proto-park space already exists at New Bridge Lane with a popular riverside restaurant opposite Vernon Mill. The Vernon resident will always try to leave her car in its colossal underground car park wherever possible, even on very wet days. All aspects of civic life are walkable. 20 Minutes to Merseyway Shopping Centre.

Each of the buildings on the map will contain a faculty that has civic relevance to most of the resident population, for most of the time. It will contain schools from pre-school to sixth form

and post sixth form training. Also two large ground floor supermarkets with comprehensive retail offer including white goods, laundries, banks, swimming pools and small gyms, religious spaces, clinic and health centre, dentists, physiotherapists, craft workshops, child care, age and disability care and vets on the ground floor of these proposed blocks. The residents will live above these facilities. Some open-air facilities will be retained such as a football pitch and some allotments; skate boarding and small-scale motorcycle mud tracks will be set up as agreed on the fringes. This will offer youth skills and pleasures.



The site is very much a hub for country activities at Warth Meadow and nearby Reddish Vale Park and Victorian Vernon Park bridged into the new town. Nearby Woodbank Park and the Goyt Valley are walkable for riding, shooting, fishing and cricket amongst

other pursuits. All available without crossing a road because of its fortunate position.

Vernon as planned, is utopian. It will provide good practice indicators and pointers for Stockport with its current lack of town centre residential property, unchecked accumulation of vacant and ageing properties and unregulated traffic chaos. There will be competition to acquire a place at Vernon and civic pride will lead to the high standard of maintenance and civic responsibility and pride. Park style pedestrianisation is immensely safe, popular and profitable. Once in place it will result in a programme of nearby road closures and “emparking” which will turn the fortunes of Stockport towards a long awaited economic renaissance. Stockport town centre will grasp the opportunity to empark itself as a heritage town in response to the Vernon model. Bypasses will be consolidated only as bypasses and the rest will be conducted on foot or electric public transport.

### Private motor vehicles

The price the residents of Vernon will pay for the privilege of so many facilities is the loss of their motor vehicles parked in the streets of the town, which will be all red route. This is as strictly pedestrian as in the City of Venice, Italy. This will become more remarkable because there is ostensibly no demonstrable need to ban private motor vehicles when they could be

allowed to proliferate as in the nearby ribbon suburbs in the eastern and western fringes built in the 1930s. However the additional area footprint of extra vehicles and garages prevents the building of this type of residential density. Vernon is not buildable with cars attached to 3800 dwellings at two cars + per family. Their private cars will be housed in a colossal underground car park designed for 2000 cars at Pear Mill, beneath the electrical substation in a flood proof chamber. Sharing and car free lifestyles can be incentivised. The excavated soil from the huge car park will flood-proof the town site by lifting the ground level in strategic places.

The problems raised and solved by this new town will offer clear-sighted policy packages for the development of Stockport in parallel. The twinning of these two towns will form a very profitable partnership on every level. Both places will acquire urban skills and insights from each other. Both towns will benefit from the spending patterns generated by the residents in situ. Some Vernon residents will walk to the new Stockport Exchange offices. Stockport will identify the profits available from a car exclusion zone and an understanding of its position within its river facilities resources. The new town will attract visitors who will interrogate this urban project and elevate Vernon Garden Village to case study of global significance and fame Tourism will surge because this is a radical solution to the GMSF. The intersecting space of Vernon will be managed as a precious resource.

## Green:

This is a new garden village; a small town inside a park plantation. Heritage Vernon Park will not be altered except for open access on Stockport Road West. 3000 + new trees will be planted along boundaries and pathways. Synchronised and synergised with recycling facilities at Bredbury, via Crookilley Way. Allotment culture promoted and extended using school educational initiatives. The roofs of several block planted as green lungs and roof gardens to continue the appearance of meadow at the roof level of blocks of flats. There will be stables and dog walking waste recycling. Composting of household waste. Heat exchange schemes will be fully integrated into the 15 blocks. Local industry costs will benefit from the proximity of this new town. The blocks will heat rooms using some solar windows as well as flanking and roof solar panels to reduce the drain on the grid. Water recycling plant will also assist the new community especially with swimming pools.

## Smart:

The avoidance of car use is a fundamental principle of the new town. A 2000 space underground car park at Pear Mill. New York residents smart parking density thus:



This is a radical urban proposition that will reduce congestion in local roads, save money for the residents, and create business opportunities for taxis and public transport. The pedestrian metabolism of the new town is highly desirable. There will be cooperative living initiatives, such as sharing of milk deliveries and school run timetables. The town will be devoted to cycling, health and fitness, and swimming pool activities. There will be squash, tennis and 3 children's playgrounds. The digital networks are essential to the function of the town as deliveries will be brought in on a significant scale, including the delivery of shopping from the supermarkets on manned electric trolleys. There will be digital synergy to prevent the duplication of visits to local retail outlets. Each resident will post shared shopping lists, which can be managed centrally. Vernon town authority is a resident ward councillor in touch with the changing needs of the community, responsive to the evolving needs of the residents and aware of voluntary town codes and statutes.

Deliveries to Vernon by outside retailers will be encouraged because the town and many will work from home or in the nearby business parks, which surround the site. Therefore, this place will see a high level of on-line shopping and delivery traffic, car sharing, taxis and a circular electric bus and, in time, a tram connecting Vernon to the A6 through Great Portland Street, Princes Street along the edge of the M60.

## Resilient:

The town has little room to grow but has a possible set of satellite sites such as the cemetery on St Paul's Street which can be conserved and developed as residential blocks. New accommodation to occupy the redesigned Portwood and Bredbury roundabout systems as land becomes more valuable. Other parcels of land on St Marys Way currently used as car dealership lots will be able to join the Vernon New Town community. The new town council will make decisions to develop employment opportunities and transport developments that will support the new community in its integration with this part of Greater Manchester. It will encourage cycling. Most flats will have large balconies facing towards the beautiful parkland area of the Goyt valley. Once the trees are mature, residents will be looking out above the tree canopy into an unbroken sea of foliage and landscape. As if they are floating inside a sea of green leaves. The 3000 + new trees will aerate the town and indigenous wildlife will be offered a diverse environment. Many evergreens flourish at this latitude and the orientation towards the sun will promote growth.

## Density:

The New town will contain 3800 new dwellings in 15 curving blocks designed to convey a sense of a marina with sailing boats. The concentration of light and power needs will be best served by the design of these curving blocks 5 – 13 stories high. Advanced architectural design will offer an inhabited gateway structure and block motorway pollution, ground floor facilities, colours, glass, steel, and brick and tile. Balconies and views of Vernon Park, use of riverside leisure, curving blocks that catch the light across the change from winter to summertime and privacy. The selling prices will match affordable new home status. Some rental and sub-let factored into the legal frameworks of occupancy. The topographical gradients create a sunken arena and separate the ribbon housing to the East and West of the new town from shadow and interference from shadow on neighbours.

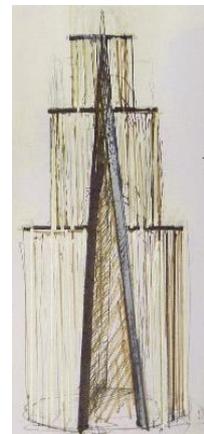


*Edward Hopper: **Gloucester Harbour 1912**. Whitney Museum, New York . Boat sails in an estuary between traditional housing with planting. Exactly the design concept adopted for Vernon Garden City.*



*Roman mosaic from Ostia Antica. Boat sails here interpreted as residential blocks of flats. A lighthouse tower is the central landmark at the Roman Port of Portus (Ostia). Vernon would have a tower IN – SPIRE (right) at its*

*entrance gate signalling the transition from the Garden Village to the now closed New Bridge Lane and Vernon Park. Mostly clad in solar panels.*



## Objections to the new town of Vernon; generic and specific

Vernon Garden Village is presented here as a theoretical critique of the GMSF Stockport masterplan which pinpoints a fragmented scatter of urban pockets. A proposal to infiltrate 19,300 dwellings into the greater Stockport land map is, in my urbanist experience, very damaging because the new tenants will all demand motor vehicles and infrastructure that is much more costly, socially, economically and in quality of life. Nobody will live near anything they want to use regularly. The small suburban villa of the 1930s on ribbon road verge land is fully sated. Vernon actually protects greenbelt.

Three such towns should be planned each with up to 4000 dwellings per village.

Vernon is a sample test case that argues for a density; concentration of community above its services and close to its work place. All car free which is now a sign of good social status.

The Lower Bredbury site selected for Vernon Garden Village is not a designated site from the GMSF masterplan. It contains a number of stakeholder rights, which might never be purchased. The gas and electricity infrastructure is so fundamentally interwoven into the pattern of land use that these might render further discussion of Vernon impossible.

As with all utopian schemes the proposal is unaffordable and unworkable. It seeks to dispense with the free-for-all car commuting, three point turns and pavement parking which is an access norm in the borough. The motor vehicle tradition has evolved over 60 years and has no prospect of change. The motor vehicle lobby will oppose the principle of car-free living as if it is a virus with potential to spread. It might.

Its greatest problem is the forced confrontation of the road lobby with the residential lobby. A four-wheel room sized footprint of a car or van in preference to the spending power of people on foot. Vernon is a strictly pedestrian town, without exception. A formal town inside a formal garden. It arrives with its bypass at Crookilley Way already in place. Other suburban roads only feed it for access as if it is a gated estate. Vernon will get the benefit of the colossal road infrastructure, in particular its proximity to Manchester Airport, but it will not be obliged to tolerate more vehicle chaos inside its child safe oasis.

It is essential that traffic should be curtailed at Vernon gates because many of the urban problems of the region and Stockport town in particular are generated by bypassing traffic, parking obstacles and rat runs in a medieval town.

Crookilley Way will be the only but efficient fast bypass. No other bypass will be available to private vehicle traffic. The rest of the town is 10 mph or prohibited private car use altogether. Visitors will all use park and ride electric public transport. Park Hill Estate 1957-61 at Sheffield attempted a series of arena like structures as a connected ribbon. The exclusion of traffic was significant, but this project suffers from urban isolation. Ribbon walkways were seen as sociable and aspirational but generated an insecurity amongst tenant/owners. Each of the Vernon residential blocks has its own typology, shape, security and identity. Vernon is not an exercise in urban social standardisation.



*Park Hill Estate at Sheffield 1957-61*

*Potentially effective if it could be transferred to the Vernon site and greened. Made smart with retail and all services on the ground floor. Residents still needed their cars for every other need except laundry*

The current culture of road building will prevent this town from developing in the direction of Stockport because of the colossal man made barrier of the Portwood roundabout. A pedestrianised solution would need to be considered alongside a new tram route into Great Portwood Street from Vernon New Town.

Politically it questions the relevance of a Goyt Valley extension highway for the M60. The momentum of this project may need to accept the need for 19,300 new dwellings in preference to other road plans. For instance, the two roundabouts and their roadside splay constructed at Bredbury and the access to the M60 at that point occupies the same footprint as the whole Vernon proposal (see above).

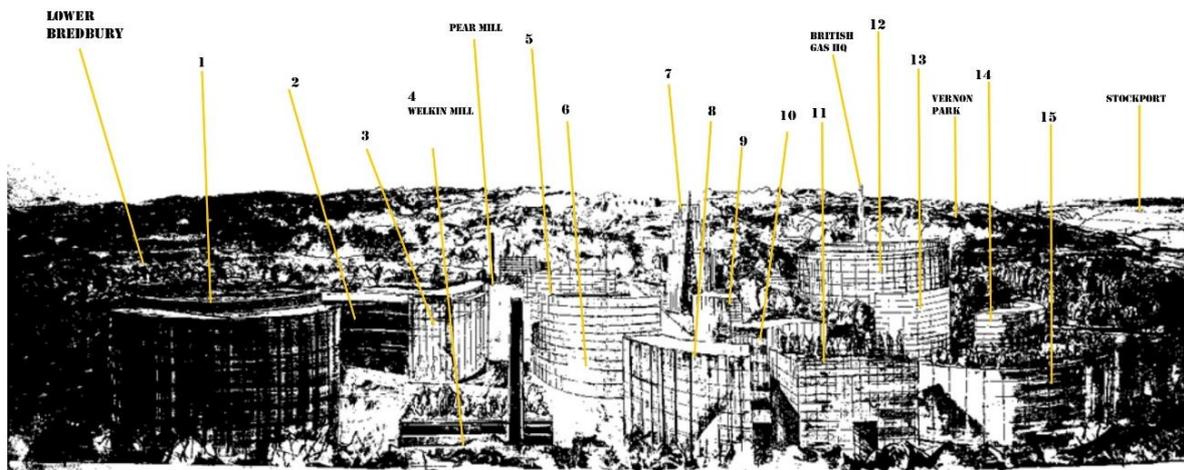
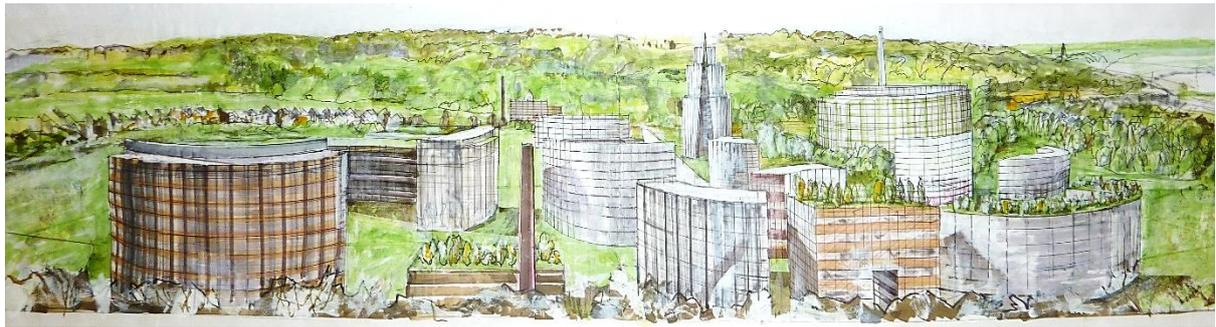
Boroughs like Stockport were encouraged in the 1980s to squander land capital on super highways and there is no strategy for policy change. The new dwellings that Vernon might have absorbed will inevitably be dispersed into brown field pockets which is to retreat to the precepts of the 1960s building boom, as the GMSF unwittingly perpetuates. That implies ribbon residential dwellings far from the site of employment, small suburban villas that are no longer sustainable. About 40,000 new motor vehicles would be added to the borough by 2030 because no one lives near anything they need; schools, work or shops. Vernon takes at least 2000 cars off the road network. People in Vernon live within a kilometre of the

workplace, the school and the supermarket. This is a suburb as a working town. A town whose primary business is housing. Vernon actually protects piecemeal and fragmentary destruction of the green belt.

Vernon must close Stockport Road West + New Bridge Lane for a distance of 600 metres. Also redundant are St Pauls Street and most of New Zealand Road. This is compensation to the new residents for giving up their cars to a central car park under Pear Mill. UK Highways and green belt legislation may seek to prevent this. The residents will require a very large "garden". This is provided by this very happy location.

Local industries with a toehold on the site will object to Vernon but could be woven into the fabric of the new working town concept especially with heat exchange schemes. Residents who walk their dogs on the fields will also object to Vernon Garden Village for a variety of reasons.

APPENDIX panorama sketch renders of Vernon Garden Village seen from Crookilley way



**VERNON GARDEN VILLAGE**

© DAVID CHANDLER 2017

Vernon: the fifteen residential dwellings in context.



Vernon as seen travelling West towards Portwood on Crookilley Way from the M60



Vernon the realigned Welkin Way and the 'In-spire' lighthouse tower on the closed section of Stockport Road West. Welkin and Pear Mills at left. Woodbank Park on the horizon



Vernon oblique view showing the 350 dwelling Gas Board Island block following the line of the River Goyt. This pivotal design was central to the adoption of the curve as a planning norm throughout the new town.