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The Research on Differences and Policies of Housing Provision in UK Cities before and after the WWII

Renrui Wang

Department of Bartlett School of Planning, University College London, London, UK
Email: zczlrw1@ucl.ac.uk

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Abstract

WWII dealt a heavy blow to British cities, especially to urban housing provision. The purpose of this research paper is to compare the differences in urban housing supply data and policies in the UK before and after the WWII and draw out some successful experiences and housing policies. With reference to the changes in housing provision in London and Manchester before and after WWII, this essay firstly focuses on an overall development process of housing provision before and after WWII in British industrial cities represented by the two cities through a comparative and analytical data research method. Then, through comparative analysis, the article compares what effective government policies were put in place to stabilise housing supply before and after the WWII. Before WWII, the government met the large demand for working-class housing by clearing slums and increasing housing construction, while after WWII, the government encouraged the development of counter-urbanisation and dealt some conflicts in the urban-rural fringe to ensure effective urban housing provision.

Keywords

WWII, Housing Provision, Slum Clearance, Housing Construction, Counter-Urbanization

1. Introduction

The focus of this article is on the period before and after World War II (WWII). The full timeline begins as early as the Victorian era and continues into the 21st century. The purpose of this article is to analyze and summarize the development, causes of change, current situation, and future of urban

housing supply in the UK by comparing data on housing supply in the major cities of London and Manchester before and after WWII. At the same time, the essay uses these data and reports to compare the housing policies implemented by the government before and after the WWII to stabilize the housing supply, and which were the more successful experiences, such as coping with slum clearance, increasing housing construction, development of the counter-urbanization, and the conflicts in the urban-rural fringe. Finally, the essay draws the conclusions.

During WWII, British urban architecture suffered greatly. The large industrial cities of London and Manchester all lost a large number of housing buildings during the war. For example, on 29 December 1940, 130 German bombers dropped 300 bombs on London in one minute, engulfing the area around St Paul's Cathedral in a sea of smoke and fire, forcing a large number of residents out of their homes and into air raid shelters, and striking approximately one-third of the old town (Editors, 2010). The destruction of urban housing brought about by the war was devastating. At the same time, the British Army began recruiting civilians to increase its WWII capacity and the army reached 2.9 million by 1945, a form of recruitment that came to be known as national service. Even though Britain was not directly involved in the war, it paid a high price for victory, with 384,000 soldiers killed in action and 70,000 civilians killed. This was primarily due to German bombing during the Blitz (UK Parliament, 2010).

It was not only the death of the population that was brought about by the war. The loss of population was also very serious and had a very negative effect on urban housing. During WWII, most citizens began to move out of the cities and back into the countryside. Struggling cities lost a large number of residential residents. The residents would not pay for the government's war, and the homes of the residents who moved away were at least not threatened by bombs. Therefore, after WWII, the British government also made it a priority to provide housing and ensure a supply of urban housing and built a lot of social security housing. Thus, people were attracted to move back to cities where residential development had been successful. Social housing was built as Paul Sweeney of the think tank centre for Cities analyzed for British cities, and only people living in social housing were reluctant to move, because they might have to queue up in a new city.

2. Changes in Housing Provision before and after WWII

The following section of this article will summarize data and reports on housing supply in London and Manchester, two typical industrial cities in the United Kingdom. Using WWII as the cut-off point, a timeline is traced from the Victorian era to the end of the twenty-first century. It will explain in detail how data on housing supply has changed in Britain's industrial cities since the war, as the cities have grown, by comparing the two cities before and after WWII.

2.1. Before WWII

Prior to WWII, London's development as the world's economic centre and the largest city in England was relatively irrational, particularly in terms of housing supply. This was primarily due to continuous and dramatic population growth in pre-war London. As London's population grew dramatically in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the average household size reached nearly four people by 1931. The average household size did not decrease until WWII in 1939, when London's population reached 8.6 million. As a result, prior to WWII, as the city grew and the population grew, London's housing supply trended from undersupply to a relative balance of supply and demand.

Firstly, in the Victorian era, London experienced a housing crisis around the early 1890s, with the emergence of large numbers of homeless people on the streets indicating a lack of rental housing supply in society, the relatively high cost of private renting and the expense and insecurity of private rented accommodation. This was inextricably linked to the massive movement of workers into the cities. According to incomplete statistics, in 1851, around 50% of the country's population chose to make their homes in London. At the height of the population, London was home to around 6.5 million people, but local authorities only counted 3.2 million houses (The National Archives, 2019). London's huge population growth also reflected the negative effects of the city's rapid growth. In that era, workers' dormitories were available for rent to a large number of people who were not crowded into the city but had no housing options (Dennis, 1989). There was a huge demand for housing in London at the time, but the supply was far less than half of the demand. The late Victorian period saw a severe shortage of housing in London. During this time, according to **Table 1**, most property owners belonged to the city's "very poor" or "poor" sections, and thus charged higher rents by splitting up the very limited space available. A two-story house built for a family of four with five rooms was divided into 30 rooms, according to one tenant report. It was, however, divided into 30 rooms, each of which housed 6 - 10 mechanics. At the time, this type of splitting was very common in London. The housing shortage was somewhat alleviated until

Table 1. Type of dwelling-owner in 1891 (Dennis, 1989).

Type of dwelling-owner	Percentage				
	Population	Very poor	Poor	Better paid	Middle class
Philanthropic or semi-philanthropic	72,441	3.9	19.4	76.2	0.5
Private owners or unknown landlords	45,131	17.4	39.0	43.4	0.3
Large trading Cos & private owners with at least four blocks	69,598	10.0	33.6	55.8	0.6
Employers housing their workpeople	1938	--	6.2	93.8	--
Grand total	189,108	9.4	29.2	61.1	0.5

1911 when the supply of housing in London reached a level of about 7.6 million units (The National Archives, 2019).

After the end of the World War I (WWI), Britain entered an era of private home ownership, during which slums were cleared from the cities and new housing was built on old land. According to statistics, as much as 80% of the population of London began renting from private landlords at that time. Especially after the government passed the "Housing and Town Planning Act" in 1919, the local authorities in London decided to subsidize the construction of council houses. At the same time, the cost of constructing these new houses was shared by tenants, the Treasury, and local governments. This measure boosted overall housing supply development in London, including the Essex towns of Barking, Ilford, and Dagenham, where London County Council built approximately 30,000 new homes during that period, according to statistics. Slum clearance combined with increased housing construction reduced high house prices. The average price of a house in London in the 1930s, according to government figures at the time, was £500. Meanwhile, the average skilled worker's annual salary was around £175, which meant that the average housing price was about 2.8 times the average skilled worker's annual salary. Meanwhile, consider the housing trend prior to the Blitz in 1930, when there was more of a rental culture across London, with approximately 73% of people renting and 20% - 50% of annual household income spent on rent.

Manchester's growth as another major industrial city was largely dependent on the growth of the cotton industry. By the middle of the 19th century, the city became the quintessential British "factory of the world". Large numbers of young laborers flocked to the city from the countryside, eager to find work in the new factories and mills. This was due to the relatively high wages in Manchester's factories, and families who migrated to the city often saw a considerable increase in income. But life in the mills was not pleasant in all respects. As a result, Manchester grew from a small market town of less than 10,000 people in the early 18th century to the second largest city in England of 400,000 people by 1851 (Griffin, 2014).

In the Victorian era, Manchester's housing supply was comparable to that of London. Due to the influx of labour, both cities experienced severe housing shortages, resulting in housing pressure. According to **Figure 1**, the housing situation across Manchester and Salford in 1904 was very overcrowded. Manchester, like many other industrial cities in England at the time, was in desperate need of a large number of workers. Manchester's factories provided the most visible evidence of the city's economic growth, while the city also provided a large number of job opportunities for new immigrants. Factories, for example, require operators, but they also require construction, maintenance of machinery, and organisation of warehouses. All of this adds up to steady work for those who flock to the city. However, the city only prepared the workforce for a large number of jobs, not for housing. According to development reports from the

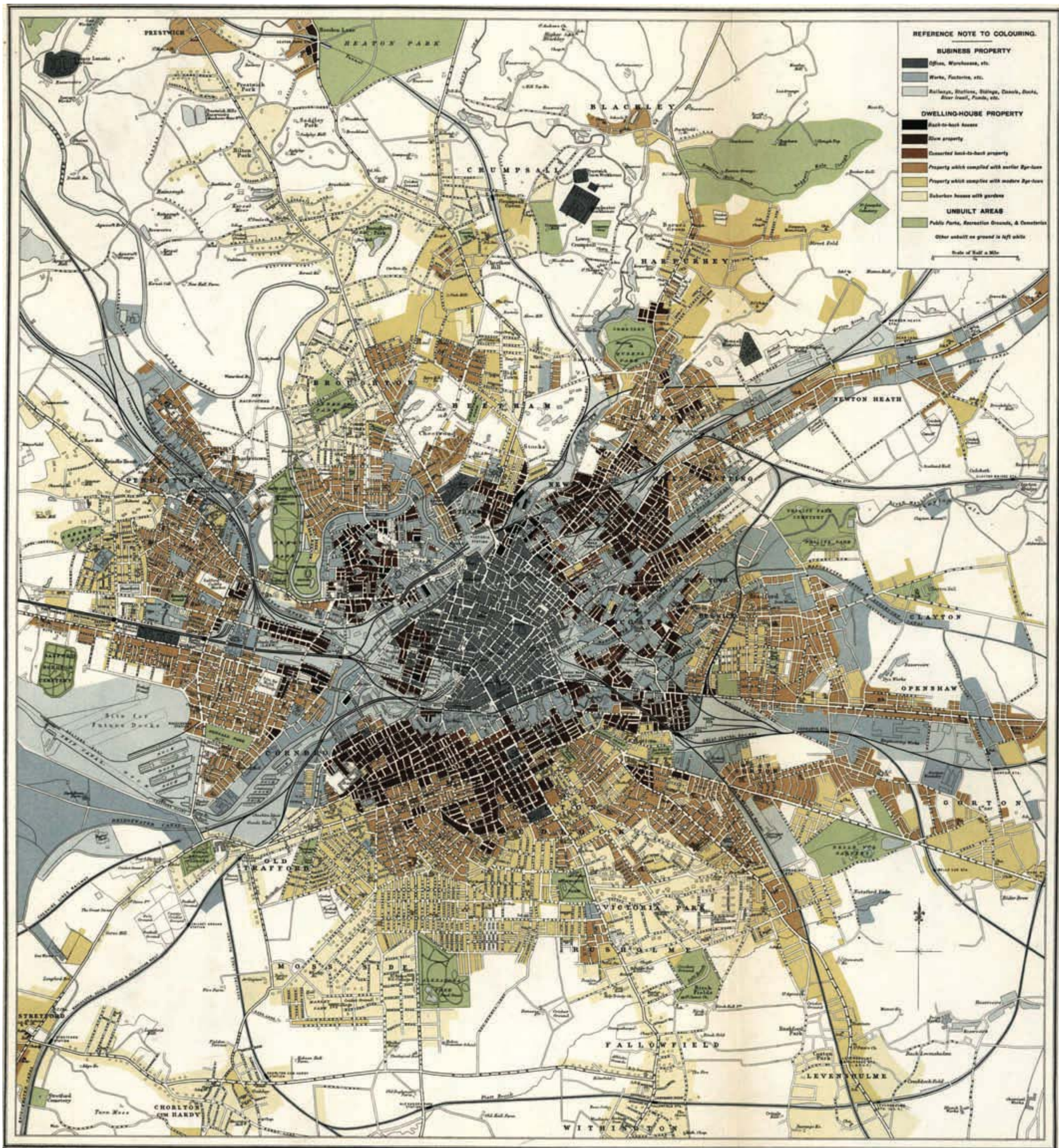

Figure 1. The crowded state of housing across Manchester and Salford in 1904 (Dodge, 2017).

time, Manchester's inner city had dense labour populations. These prosperous inner cities were typical of Victorian slums. There were at least 200 to 400 dwellings per hectare, which is roughly twice to four times the density of modern suburban dwellings (Haslam, 2002). For example, 30,000 people are crammed into less than one square mile of unsanitary slums in Angel Meadow, near Rochdale Road and Miller Street. Many people in the area end up living in cel-

lars, some of which are 15 feet underground. Manchester in those days, according to Dickens' "Coke Town in Hard Times", was a city of uninspired brick buildings and coal dust.

Following WWI, Manchester authorities evolved urban planning from early surveys to detailed formal development proposals and guidelines under the "Housing Act" of 1909, rationalised land use zoning plans, and began clearing slums. Under the "Housing and Town Planning Act" of 1920, all local authorities with a population of more than 20,000 were required to plan (Garrett, Nicol, & Mackay, 2020). At the same time, "Fresh Housing Act" of 1930 expanded on the slum policy. Prior to WWII, a series of Acts resulted in the planned dispersal of population, slum clearance, resettlement, and "garden" suburbs within the city. This was followed by a massive overflow of property. Meanwhile, The Manchester and District Joint Town Planning Advisory Committee was formed in 1921. The government then reorganised land use and activities to create a more unified area for residential, commercial, and industrial activities, and approximately 250,000 new housing units were supplied during this period to meet the city's housing needs while also improving the productivity and well-being of the city's people (Dodge & Brook, 2013). Furthermore, the authorities' responsibilities for improving workers' housing conditions were much broader in this period than they are now, including utilities such as water and sewage, as well as basic health services. Chorltonville, a large garden suburb, was completed in 1911. The interior design of the 270 dwellings, mostly 4-bed semi-detached cottages, was inspired by the Arts and Crafts movement of the time (Dodge, 2017).

2.2. After WWII

During WWII, aerial bombardment caused extensive damage to London, destroying the docks as well as many industrial, residential, and commercial areas, including the historic city centre. Approximately 60% of London's buildings were damaged or destroyed during the 246-day aerial bombardment, and approximately 1.5 million people were made homeless. The end of the war brought the return of evacuees, and despite a severe shortage of building materials, reconstruction of London began immediately. As a result, after WWII, London briefly had a huge gap in housing supply, with a severe shortage of housing supply. However, as a result of massive government intervention, housing provision eventually became a state in which supply exceeded demand.

In order to solve the housing supply problem, the London government started to redevelop a large number of houses. The government invested heavily in building new houses and apartments and improving services, and London's urban planning redevelopment became more widely accepted. Until the 1980s, London had a large and growing public housing sector provided by the London County Council (LCC) (1889-1965) and later the Greater London Council (1965-1986), plus the boroughs. In the period 1946-61, nine-tenths of all post-war housing in London was provided by local authorities, more than half of

which was provided by the LCC alone. The result was that by the 1950s some 318,750 houses had been built. Four-fifths of the new houses were built by the London public sector. These solid, well-built council houses not only provided a relatively quick solution to London's post-war housing shortage, but also played an important role in improving the lives of millions of working-class people. From the 1960s to the 1980s, borough councils embarked on additional large-scale housing construction programmes, while some boroughs, such as Camden and Islington, municipalized Private Rented Sector (PRS) housing. From 1961 to 1981, the number of people living in local government apartments and houses increased by nearly 60% as a result of continued increases in housing supply and the implementation of the municipalization programme (Watt & Minton, 2016). According to incomplete statistics, the supply of inner-city housing in London in 1984 was around 840,000 units.

At the same time, in order to solve the housing supply problem, London also decided to develop the surrounding urban areas and evacuate people to the surrounding areas. Firstly, the government enacted a series of laws and policies. Based on the "Greater London Plan" of 1944, the government introduced the "New Towns Act" of 1946, the "Town and Country Planning Act" of 1948, and in 1947 and 1968, gave municipalities unprecedented land in 1947 and 1968, gave the City unprecedented powers to purchase land and control development in London. Some Londoners and their jobs were relocated to new towns around the capital and to "aid areas" in parts of the British provinces as a result of acts and policies. Following that, the future metropolis of London decentralised further into the southeast of England, even beyond the wooded areas. After policy changes, the government had created eight new settlements outside of the city by the 1980s. As a result, the rest of Greater London's southeast was evacuated, relieving pressure on urban housing provision. The population decreased from approximately 8,193,000 in 1951 to approximately 6,600,000 in 1991.

Residential building in London has continued into the twenty-first century. At the same time, 75 London social housing areas have been redeveloped or converted, and over 100 council-built estates have been completely or partially demolished as a result of a revised housing policy. From 2004 to 2014, approximately 50 estates were redeveloped in London, nearly doubling the total number of housing units to nearly 68,000 (Watt & Minton, 2016). The number of government homes in the UK has remained stable in recent years. The London Housing Strategy for the new century includes affordable housing targets. It includes the purchase of existing private sector affordable housing as well as the construction of new housing. The government monitors and supports the majority of London's affordable housing supply through GLA funding by using MHCLG's national affordable housing supply statistics. According to the most recent GLA figures, London had a total net housing supply of 35,699 units in 2018-2019, including 36,129 conventionally completed homes. With GLA support, London has 13,318 affordable housing starts and 9051 completions in

2020-2021. The MHCLG statistics include housing funded by other sources as well, with 18,728 sheltered housing starts and 10,360 completions in London in 2019-2021 (London Datastore, 2022).

In terms of house prices, it is worth noting that in 2015, for example, the average house price in London for the year was a staggering £481,000, according to the London Land Registry. However, the average annual salary wage of the average worker is about £34,500, and house prices have soared to 13.9 times the annual salary. And tenants typically spend about 60% - 70% of their household income on rent. Thus, the extent to which house prices and rental costs have increased side-by-side in the capital has also created more pressure on residents to live in the city. At the same time, it is worth noting that, unlike the 19th century, the majority of contemporary people choose to buy a house to live in. With data from 2001, only about 16% of London residents chose to rent a house (London Datastore, 2022). This may also be related to the economic downturn. Until 2015, about 26% of people in London were renting and about 77% chose to own a property. This is a rise of almost 10% compared to the early 21st century, suggesting that the culture of renting is now returning in London, but nowhere near the extent it was before WWII. By comparison, in 1930, as mentioned above, only about 27% chose to buy a house, and that was against a backdrop where the average price of property was about 2.8 times the annual salary of the average skilled worker.

Manchester, another major British city, was also bombed to varying degrees during WWII. A large number of homes in the city were damaged. The city's Trafford Park, the largest arsenal in Britain, was also a major target for German bombers (Haslam, 2002). Replacing bombed houses and resettling working people was urgent in the immediate postwar years. Securing housing provision and the wider environment through urban planning was at the heart of the agenda that the Manchester government began to implement. The peak of new housing construction in Manchester after the war was reached in 1954 when approximately 350,000 homes were completed (Dodge, 2017).

However, the city's housing provision has since been the target of a slew of political and policy interventions at various scales and in various forms. The government encouraged regional and population dispersal policies in the 1950s and 1960s in an attempt to create new jobs and better social housing on the outskirts of the city. Manchester's trade with containerization declined dramatically in the early 1970s. Manchester could not afford a port that could handle large container ships and had storage space, resulting in a dramatic decline in the city's workforce. Meanwhile, as conditions in the inner city and some outlying residential areas deteriorated, urban policies took precedence over regional policies. Manchester has gone through a series of urban policies since then, and in the 1980s and especially in the 1990s, EU Structural Funds funded projects drove a portion of Manchester's housing provision, but the housing stock was only 195,000 units. The city gradually entered a recessionary economic cycle, making

housing provision more difficult (Haslam, 2002). As a result, Manchester's overall housing provision after WWII demonstrates a lack of momentum and policy intervention.

2.3. Summary of Comparison and National Housing Supply

Combining the development of housing provision in the above two most representative British cities, it is not difficult to find that they are closely linked to the fate of national development. To sum up the development of housing provision in England. First of all, in the Victorian era, the influx of population caused the problem of very short supply of housing. In 1845, the national housing stock was about 3 million, and between 1851 and 1911, there was a massive increase in housing construction as urban slums were cleared across the country. The housing stock in England, Wales, and Scotland more than doubled. The national housing stock increased from 3.8 million houses to 8.9 million houses. Until 1921, when there was a national recession, the state, through the councils, built nearly 500,000 homes, and another 500,000 homes built by the private sector. At the same time, in the mid-19th world, the national average weekly earnings were less than 0.5% per year, but in 1911 this value grew to a level of almost 1.0% per year (Lamont, 2020). Thus, with the construction of more houses of smaller size and the increase in the average income of workers. Britain became more expensive overall during the second half of the 19th century.

Following WWI, the government-imposed rent controls. The Wheatley subsidy encouraged house construction and private ownership in 1924. As owner occupancy increased in the mid-1920s, housing provision expanded at a rapid pace in the 1930s. It peaked in 1934, when nearly 290,000 units were built in England over the course of a year. At the same time, the type of housing in that period was more typical, with "houses" remaining the most common type of property developed and the architectural style leaning toward Tudorbethan, with hill walls and steeply sloping roofs. Following WWII, the Luftwaffe dropped over one million incendiary bombs (bombs designed to ignite) and approximately 50,000 tones of high explosive bombs on 16 cities across the country, destroying a large number of residential buildings. The British government made post-war housing recovery its top priority in 1945, promising the public "A Separate Home for Every Family that Wants One". Between 1900 and 1998, the housing stock in Britain increased from about 7 million to 22 million permanent homes as the urban population increased from 77% to 89%. Construction of new homes peaked in 1968, with 413,700 new homes completed. According to **Figure 2**, in 1950s, the number of new dwellings in the UK was around 250,000, but by the 1970s this had grown to over 400,000. At the same time, the rise in real incomes of citizens from 1945 to the present has increased effective demand for private ownership. Mortgage availability and the implementation of the "right to buy" in the 1980s also encouraged home ownership. In the late twentieth century, the government also gradually dictated housing construction trends with

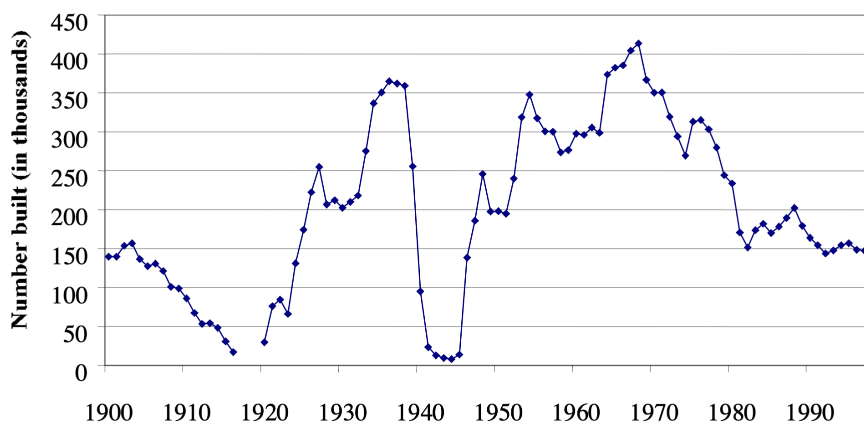

Figure 2. New dwellings in the UK from 1900-1998 (Hicks & Allen, 2021).

the help of market forces, ensuring housing provision. Moreover, unlike after WWII, the most common type of dwelling in the country evolved into semi-detached dwellings, which accounted for approximately 4.9 million throughout the twentieth century, accounting for 31% of total stock (Hicks & Allen, 2021).

At the same time, WWII, various local authorities played a major role in the house redevelopment process. Construction by local private enterprises, and local authorities peaked in 1968 at about 352,540 units. Meanwhile, local authorities are continuing to clear substandard housing left in WWI's former slums. Between 1955 and 1985, more than 1.5 million houses were demolished in local authorities in England and Wales. For example, the $180 million slum clearance program was at the heart of the 1967 housing condition survey (Department for Communities and Local Government, 2017). The clean-up also focused on evacuating people from the periphery of cities to address the urban agglomeration caused by the massive rural migration to cities during Britain's Industrial Revolution in the 19th century. Slum clearance also marks the completion of the transformation of urban interior housing types from the humble and cramped conditions of the slum era to a 21st century property type of purpose-built low-rise apartments and detached houses. Figures for the changes in the UK's overall house prices are similar to those of the biggest cities such as London, after WWII. The national average house price reached its lowest point approximately after WWI 1923. After more than a century of regulation and development, the average house price in Britain in the early 21st century, which was worth about 100,000 pounds, has grown to about 451,000 pounds today. This is inseparable from the UK's position in the world today and the rapid development of industries such as fintech. Prices also clearly vary by region. In the most expensive part of London, for example, the value of an average unit of space has risen to a terrifying £660,000 (Lamont, 2020).

3. Challenges of Housing Provision before and after WWII

In the above section, this article discusses the UK urban housing data and supply

in detail. The UK government has also been constantly adjusting its own rental supply strategy in response to changes in the data. In the following sections of this essay, the data and reports used above for UK cities, or the actual housing supply scenarios for UK cities above, are used to fully explain what effective policies the government implemented before and after the war to stabilize the housing supply. For example, before WWII, British cities were mainly dealing with slum clearance and increasing housing construction. As a contrast, after WWII, as British cities continued to grow, housing supply entered a new phase of development. As major cities continued to recover after the war, the government encouraged the housing policy of development of the counter-urbanization. Meanwhile, the government is facing new challenges in stabilizing the housing supply, such as the contradictions between urban-rural fringe. Hence, the government has responded with a series of reforms.

3.1. Before WWII

3.1.1. Slum Clearance

Define abbreviations and acronyms the first time they are used in the text, even after they have been defined in the abstract. Abbreviations such as IEEE, SI, MKS, CGS, sc, dc, and rms do not have to be defined. Do not use abbreviations in the title or heads unless they are unavoidable. Before WWII, most British cities faced slum clearance problems, not just London and Manchester as mentioned in this essay. The government regarded the cleaning and renovation of slums as the fundamental solution to housing provision problem. On the one hand, the government uses its power to increase its efforts to clean up the slums. On the other hand, the government is also using the power of society to clean up slums and improve public health. Specifically, in the Victorian era, in terms of society, the role of housing charities was also particularly significant, especially in the absence of a government role in housing construction.

First, local governments were gradually and actively involved in the slum clearance of workers from the Victorian era until WWII. For the instance, London County Council (LCC), as the new housing authority of London, continued to clear the slums while buying more vacant land to build public housing (Yelling, 1982). Before the outbreak of WWI, LCC provided about 17,000 rooms in their slum clearance programs and another 11,000 rooms in suburban and out-county estates (Hall, 2014). At the same time these clean-up policies are accompanied by a number of policies to reduce the cost of rent for the working class as housing standards increase and rent levels rise, such as reducing the design costs of detached single-family homes, thereby reducing the wage risk not borne by residents' housing. The price index of housing for workers was also reduced, see **Table 2**, where the price index of urban housing in England and Wales fell by 12% in 1910 compared to 1870.The balance of housing provision is guaranteed. At the same time, real wages for most of the urban working class increased significantly in the early 20th century. The higher real incomes, as shown

Table 2. An index of urban land rents and house rents in England and Wales, 1870-1910 (Daunton, 1991).

Year	House rents	Price index	Real wage index
1870	100	100	100
1888	116	76	143
1898	123	71	165
1910	130	88	163

in **Table 2**, were sufficient to pay rents and drove up urban housing prices. Various government actions combined to stabilize housing provision prior to WWII, and the slum clearance demonstrated the need for a government-wide and legal framework for housing provision, a clear exchange of benefits between tenants and the working class, and a clear housing subsidy (Dennis, 1989).

At the same time, with the help of social and philanthropic forces, the government more effectively proceeded slum clearance to enhance and improve the public health welfare and environment of the whole society. In the early to mid-Victorian period, for instance, in London Whitechapel, there were more than 200 ordinary houses that housed about 8,000 homeless and destitute people every night (Diniejko, 2012). At the same time, there were no clean facilities such as garbage and sewage treatment in poor areas (Cuming, 2013). As the prevalence of liberalism and the speculative nature of commercial companies that drove up rents, it was difficult for the government to intervene in the housing problem at the beginning. Hence, a variety of non-profit and profit-distributing builders and organizations took actions (Morris, 2001) such as concerning the quantity and quality of housing consumed by the working class, taking large-scale measures to maintain market order and social objectives, e.g., 'Voluntary Housing Movement' in England and Wales (Hoffman, 2009), and aiming to integrate middle-class forces and rent low-lease houses. Meanwhile, since 1840s, social charity organizations launched "Model Dwelling Movement". According to data Morris used, from 1840 to 1914, at least 43 private or voluntary sector housing organizations were set up in London to solve the housing problems together. Thirty-one of these organizations produced 35,864 housing units, more than two-and-a-half times the combined contributions of London County Councils, metropolitan boroughs and city companies over the same period (Morris, 2002).

3.1.2. Increasing Housing Construction

To increase housing construction and meet the massive housing needs of the working class. From the Victorian era to the WWII war period the series of policies and regulations issued by the British government increased housing with high standards and effectively solved the shortage problem of housing to some extent. Meanwhile, there is no doubt that the government restarted the private

sector as the motor of housing construction. From the economic development perspective, the production and use of new housing also brought city development more business opportunities. There is still plenty of growing space in the development of planning and reconstruction, such as concrete, steel and gas industry, as well as furniture and bathroom fixtures (Ward, 2004).

During post-WWI era, government focused more on encouraging private companies and local authorities constructing by the support from government and promulgated a series of legislation. In order to provide local governments with financial support and rights for the construction of affordable housing, the central government enacted The "Housing of the Working Classes Act 1" in 1890. After three decades, parliament proclaimed the "Housing and Town Planning Act" in 1919. It guaranteed enough government subsidies for building 500,000 new houses. Immediately afterward, the 1924 "Wheatley Act" raised the subsidy level for rental housing built by local authorities to £9 a year for 40 years. It also specified that real estate is a long-term and sustainable resource for planned development while ensuring that the scale of housing production is sufficient for housing shortage (Clarke, 1924). Afterward, in 1930, the government enacted the "Housing Act", which also specifically provided financial subsidies for slum clearance (Parker, 1999). The promulgation of many acts marked the initial formation of the UK housing allowance system and the British Public Housing System, and it also marked that the government had more direct intervention in the housing issue.

Meanwhile, the government had made great achievements in the housing construction. Between 1919 and 1930, about 4 million houses were built. Nearly 3 million of these were occupiers, an unprecedented change from the 750,000 in the early 1920s. For housing provision, this period was the great era. Supported by various acts, according to statistics that Leland used, more than 320,000 houses were built by private enterprise in London (Leland, 1970). The Treasury paid more than £320,000 in grants from 1923; hence, nearly 63 percent of all 709,555 houses built between 1920 and 1929 were purchased by owner-occupiers (Leland, 1970). Meanwhile, the planners began to focus on the construction of supporting facilities, to make them more humanized. For example, LCC purchased "Woodberry Down" in 1934, and planned to make huge achievements in education and medical welfare, to build a new health centre, and a series of educational venues from nursery to middle school (Parker, 1999). By 1911, there were twice as many Manchesterites working in metal and engineering as in textiles, with others working in transportation and communications (ports and railway stations), food, or automobile manufacturing. The majority of city workers lived in dense urban neighbourhoods, with back-to-back housing types densely packed around factories and warehouses. As a result, to stabilise housing provision, authorities cleared or discontinued the use of "Back-to-Back" row houses in densely populated worker areas, according to **Figure 3**. And a large number of new housing units were built. Public health improvements were also

Figure 3. "Back-to-Back" English worker's row house form built in the late 18th to 20th century.

quickly implemented, and by around 1900, all the worst worker slums had been demolished or improved (Haslam, 2002).

3.2. After WWII

3.2.1. Development of the Counter-Urbanization

After WWII, as the UK urban population and economy continued to recover in all aspects. Urban development has been accompanied by a steady increase in inner-city housing redevelopment projects. However, the supply of inner-city housing has gradually become saturated in recent years. At the same time, the urban areas of large cities have become too densely populated and the quality of life has deteriorated. In recent years, the population has gradually moved to suburban and rural areas with beautiful environments and better living conditions. Therefore, the only way to ensure stable and sustainable housing provision is to continuously develop the peripheral areas of cities and develop counter-urbanization. In the process of urbanization, the citizens of urban centers began to spread to the suburban areas, and the population density of urban centers declined sharply. Counter-urbanization is also an essential phenomenon in the study of urbanization in the UK.

To begin with, the development of counter-urbanization has made Britain's urbanisation more natural to some extent. During the counter-urbanization process, a large number of industrial enterprises and citizens began to relocate to towns and cities, resulting in a large amount of development funds and employment opportunities for the surrounding areas and towns (Ramon & James, 2021). For example, counter-urbanization development in the world's most

densely populated urban agglomeration, London, is based on the London-Liverpool axis, which includes Manchester. As a result, large UK companies are increasingly locating their headquarters in small towns, with Thames Water's headquarters in Swindon and British Gas's headquarters in Windsor. Many multinational corporations have also established their UK headquarters in small towns, such as E. ON, which has its UK headquarters in the small town of Coventry, and Toyota, which has its UK headquarters in the small town of Portsmouth. The BBC relocated five of its divisions from the London metropolitan area and its headquarters in Manchester North to Salford Quays in Manchester in 2011, establishing a new headquarters base known as media city. Furthermore, because of the large number of people moving out of urban areas, the British government does not need to be concerned about overpopulation or housing shortages caused by urbanisation. Second, counter-urbanization is essentially a continuation of urban decentralisation and, in some ways, a deeper development of suburbanization. The main manifestation of counter-urbanization in British towns is the migration of urban populations to the suburbs and the massive supply of new housing in suburban development. This type of development can not only reduce the suburban divide, but also alleviate the inner-city decentralisation, rising land prices, and other housing price problems that occur within large cities' functional areas, reducing the pressure on residents' lives (Feinerman et al., 2011). At the same time, the countryside's clean environment, superior employment opportunities, and relaxed atmosphere can provide residents with a higher quality of life

However, it is also important to be wary of the more negative consequences of unjustified counter-urbanization development. Because internal migration is a "zero-sum game", any net migration growth in one area must be offset by a net loss elsewhere, which may have a negative impact on labour supply and demand for housing, schools, stores, and other services. At the same time, the rapid growth of counter-urbanization may hasten and exacerbate problems such as rural ageing. For example, there is now an annual net outflow of older people from London to places like Bristol, where they can escape the stresses of city life. The growing elderly population in rural areas may alter rural demographics. In terms of health care, because rural areas have an older age structure than urban areas, a greater proportion of their residents may require more expensive hospital care (e.g., longer hospital stays) and more time-consuming GP consultations, particularly due to age-related visits to patients' homes or nursing homes (Gordon et al., 2003).

3.2.2. Dealing with Conflicts in the Urban-Rural Fringe

Urban sprawl is continuing along with the development of counter-urbanization. The government has also mandated that areas around cities must have large areas of agricultural land and woodland, in addition to urban land, as an integral part of obtaining fresh produce, providing open space and improving the environment, i.e., the green belt. About 12% of England is designated as a green belt. The green belt also involves public functions, such as waste management, and is

a concrete expression of urban intensification policies (Burton, 2002). For example, London, as a cosmopolitan city, has a large-scale plan of green areas around it and has formed a network. A green belt has been built around the periphery, with an average width of 8 km and a maximum width of 30 km. And the green belt is not allowed to build houses and settlements, so as to prevent the over-expansion of the city, but also as an agricultural and recreational area of London, maintaining the original small-town countryside. In recent years, however, the British government has been expanding the city to meet the housing provision. At the same time, inner-ring suburban communities are experiencing the migration of the growing population to the outer-ring suburbs (Hasse & Lathrop, 2003). As a result, urban-rural fringe has been formed in the middle of urban and rural areas, and due to the current urban over-expansion, several conflicts, such as land use conflicts, have been formed within the fringe areas around major cities in the UK.

Land use conflict is the first and an unavoidable feature of capitalist urban development. There are more issues with residential land use, particularly in rapidly developing megacities. Balancing the needs of builders and developers, as well as developing residential land capital rationally, have undoubtedly become two major challenges in rural-urban land use. First and foremost, there is disagreement among builders and planners about the underlying reasons for housing land use. The primary goal of home builders is to keep a consistent supply of construction land available while making a profit. The goal of the planner, on the other hand, is to ensure that construction sites are issued in an orderly manner within the approved policy structure, taking demographic, social, economic, and environmental factors into consideration. Meanwhile, developers and planners disagree on the best location for new residential development. The former prefers more marketable green areas, whereas the latter prefers brownfields (Pacione, 2013). As a result, minimizing the conflict of interest between the two parties is critical to the rural-urban interface's land use.

The second is the conflict between land and residential resources development. Unreasonable land development will cause serious waste of residential resources. Since the transitional characteristic of the green belt, land use in the rural-urban fringe is multi-functional and variable. As a result, if the housing development strategy does not correspond to the real land use, it would result in the waste of land and housing resources. As an illustration, during Hungary's economic transition period, the rural-urban fringe and rural lands that were mainly used for large state farms and cooperatives were used to grow residential resources, creating a vicious cycle of irrational land use and growth (Csatári, Farkas, & Lennert, 2013). Third, the conflict between meeting regional economic development and environmental requirements and using green belt land. In recent years, whether the use of land in the green belt meets environmental and economic criteria has become a point of contention in rural-urban fringe land use. Firstly because of transitivity, the mix of land uses provided by many local

governments has been unpredictable. Local planning authorities encourage land use to shift away from agriculture and toward other economic activities (Gant, Robinson, & Fazal, 2011). In the early 1990s, for example, several locations converted farmland to golf courses, but it brought lower agricultural, environmental, and ecological value of these lands. Simultaneously, this may erode the green belt's ability to prevent urban sprawl (Campaign to Protecting Rural England, 2010).

In response to emerging challenges and to stabilize housing supply, the government has implemented a series of reforms. First of all, the government has made great efforts to balance the needs of builders and planners, so that real estate growth can make an important contribution to the economic development of the urban-rural fringe. Meanwhile, competition among various land-related services may lead to land-use conflicts (Libby & Sharp, 2003). Therefore, it is important to limit the possibility of adjacent land use before balancing the needs of builders and planners. To achieve the interests of various stakeholders, the government focused on resolving a large number of disputes related to incompatibility. In addition, the government does not exclude builders and the public, but encourages them to participate more in the planning of housing resources. To attract the attention of everyone, the developer of the Kelvin View in Torrance found the defects of the local planning policies and reviewing the national and strategic policy guidelines call for the release of the Kelvin landscape area, especially for the construction of affordable housing, which makes the local urban and rural integration to obtain the greatest possible benefits of land utilization (Pacione, 2013).

On the other hand, the government's strengthening of public participation will also affect the optimization and fair development of land and housing resources, because the first step of rational development of land and housing resources is to meet the wishes of all parties. Public participation in decision-making will lead to greater social acceptance and long-term results (Chilvers, 2008). Simultaneously, the government continues to ensure that there is enough land bank to ensure the continuity of production and the rational development of land and housing resources. Moreover, the planning system provides a range of housing in the right location by determining a large supply of land (Pacione, 2013) rather than planning low housing demand targets (Abbott, 2013). Furthermore, the government incorporated the use and management of rural-urban fringe and rural land into the urban control strategy (Fertner et al., 2016), so that the production of land and housing services can be adapted to the overall economic development.

At the same time, government encouraged more of the formulation of green belt strategy maximizes land use value as much as possible. On the one hand, given the economic diversity of the rural-urban fringe, the government should not keep protecting most of the green belt at the risk of temporarily slowing economic development. In 2008, for example, the British government approved

the biggest redrawing of green belt boundaries in decades. The property will be rezoned for sale to developers as part of the government's aim to build homes (Gant, Robinson, & Fazal, 2011). On the other hand, if the government actively liberalizes the land use right of the rural-urban fringe, it will destroy the landscape and ecology of the urban and rural green belt, which also goes against the intention that the rural-urban fringe should restrict further urban expansion. Notably, in Spelthorne, academics have increasingly recognized the value of land landscapes and strongly urged local authorities to improve landscape protection to regulate developers who seek to evade strict development controls.

4. Research Findings

Before WWII, sanitation in cities was worrying due to the influx of large numbers of working classes into the cities. At this stage, the government's cleanup of slums has certain reference significance for the governance of slums in developing countries around the world and the improvement of urban sanitation. Especially on how to combine the help of social and philanthropic forces to carry out slum clearance more effectively to strengthen and improve the public health welfare and environment of the whole society. At the same time, government partnerships with non-profit and profit-sharing builders and organizations, while integrating middle-class power and leasing low-rent housing. In addition, in the process of large-scale construction, an experience worth referring to is that planners began to focus on the construction of supporting facilities to make them more humane. For example, Woodberry Down, acquired by LCC in 1934 (Yelling, 1982), established health centers in terms of education and medical benefits, as well as educational establishments such as nurseries, secondary schools, etc.

Following WWII, urban development has seen a steady increase in housing redevelopment projects in the city center. Residential pressure is too high within the city; therefore, the government's encouragement of the development of counter-urbanization is successful and timely. By evacuating to the suburbs and surrounding countryside, UK cities such as London have avoided the challenges of overpopulation and housing shortages to a certain extent (Clapson, 1998). At the same time, suburban migration, and many new housing supply from suburban development have not only narrowed the differentiation of suburbs, but also alleviated housing price problems such as the dispersion of the city center and rising land prices that may occur in functional areas of large cities. Moreover, the counter-urbanization of British housing also has a certain degree of inspiration for other cities to reduce the living pressure of residents. Regarding the contradictions in urban-rural fringe, the government's practice of encouraging builders and the public to participate more in the planning of housing resources is worth learning, because the process of public participation in decision-making can better balance the needs of all stakeholders (Domestic Council, 1976). However, it needs to be considered whether the green belt strategy has played a posi-

tive role in stabilizing the housing supply.

5. Conclusion

Housing provision has long been an important reference data for the study of urban development and change in Britain before and after WWII. This is mainly because British housing suffered greatly during the war. The large industrial cities of London and Manchester were lost to aerial bombing during WWII and were reduced to desolate ruins. In most cases, it is common practice in urban geography and urban planning studies to analyze housing supply in conjunction with other important data, such as demographic change and economic change. In this essay, we focus only on the changes in housing provision in British cities over time. At the same time, to study the change of housing provision in a town, it is necessary to understand the size of the area and the living environment, social welfare, etc. This essay finds that in the two processes of slum clearance before WWII and counter-urbanization after WWII, cities need to consider more public health and medical resources, such as workers' living conditions and rural aging, while safeguarding housing provision.

In conclusion, the development process of urban housing provision in the UK has been relatively tortuous, with London and Manchester as typical examples. Before WWII, London's housing provision showed a trend from undersupply to relatively balanced supply and demand. First, there was a housing crisis in London during the Victorian era. Then, after the end of WWI, the city cleared a large number of slums and built a large number of new houses on old land, and housing provision and demand became relatively balanced. Manchester, the world's factory, is very similar to London's situation. The city also evolved slowly from a Victorian housing crisis to a relatively balanced state after WWI. In contrast, after WWII, the housing provision in both cities has changed. London has evolved from a transient undersupply of housing to a state where supply exceeds demand. In Manchester, housing provision is generally in a state of undersupply and high policy intervention. In urban geography studies, housing provision has been an important reference data for studying urban development (Garrett, Nicol, & Mackay, 2020). Combining the development process of housing provision in the two cities, this paper compares the effective policies implemented by the British government in stabilizing housing supply before and after WWII, and summarizes which aspects are worthy of reference. Before WWII, the government met the massive demand for working-class housing primarily by clearing slums and increasing housing construction in well-planned areas. After the WWII, as the population and economy of the UK cities fully recovered, the government changed its housing supply measures. To maintain an efficient supply of urban housing, the government has begun to encourage anti-urban development and support sustainable urban expansion, but in doing so, it faces new challenges. The new era of anti-urbanization requires more consideration of

medical resources and rural aging. At the same time, the government needs to resolve land use conflicts, land and housing resource development conflicts, and balance regional economic development and environmental requirements with the use of green belt land.

Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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