



## Gordon Stephenson's Role in Planning for Post-War Reconstruction in Britain 1942-1947

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In 1941, the British planner, Gordon Stephenson, then overseeing the construction of explosive factories in Liverpool, was invited by Lord Reith to join the group of planners he was assembling to prepare for post-war reconstruction. Stephenson began work the following year and continued as the new Ministry of Town and Country Planning was created in 1943. He remained with the Planning Technique research section of the Ministry until 1947 (latterly as its head), when he returned to Liverpool to become Leverhulme Professor of Civic Design.

This was a period when the political and social expectations about the role of planning changed very radically. Its policy role and legal powers were greatly strengthened compared to pre-war experience. With colleagues in his section, Stephenson played a central role in inventing the techniques and detailed approaches that effectively 'breathed life' into this new planning, giving technical expression to the new aspirations for planning.

The paper will focus on the three main aspects of his work during this period:

Being a member of Patrick Abercrombie's team which prepared the Greater London Plan of 1944 (1943-44).

2. Preparing the detailed handbook that would guide the replanning and redevelopment of central areas of Britain's bombed and outmoded cities (published 1947)
3. Undertaking the initial planning of Britain's New Town program, especially the first New Town, Stevenage (1946).

The paper will draw on both archives (particularly the UK National Archives) and published sources to assess the significance of Stephenson's work at this time.

**KEY WORDS:** Gordon Stephenson UK Reconstruction planning, Central Area planning, Metropolitan planning, New Town planning.