NEWS LESSON

The Plan for a City in a Straight Line



BEFORE YOU READ

1 Warm up

Talk about these questions with a partner.

1. Would you live in a city with no private cars?
2. What would you want within ten minutes of your front door?
3. Would a completely planned city make everyday life simpler?

2 Key words

These words are in the article. Write the letter of the meaning (A to H) in each box.

1	**shiny**	☐	A	need something else to live or work well
2	**residents**	☐	B	very, very much
3	**supporters**	☐	C	things like water and electricity that a city provides
4	**industries**	☐	D	people who like an idea and want it to succeed
5	**services**	☐	E	types of business, such as farming or car making
6	**ordinary**	☐	F	bright and smooth, so that it reflects light
7	**extremely**	☐	G	people who live in a place
8	**depend**	☐	H	normal, not special

3 Read

Read the article and underline the key words from task 2. The paragraphs are numbered.

Saudi Arabia planned a city 170 kilometres long. In May 2026, a report said the main work had been put off until after 2030.

1 Imagine a city that is 170 kilometres long but only a short distance across. Its buildings have shiny outside walls, and people travel from one end to the other without needing ordinary cars. This was the idea behind The Line, one of Saudi Arabia's most famous building projects, and for a while it was everywhere online.

2 The Line was introduced as part of NEOM, a large plan to develop an area in the north-west of the country. Designers imagined a completely new way of life, with homes, shops and workplaces close together. Fast transport would carry residents from one part of the city to another in minutes, so nobody would spend an hour stuck in traffic.

3 The pictures of the planned city looked like something from a science-fiction film. Supporters believed the project could show the world a different way to build cities. They also hoped it would attract workers, tourists and businesses, and help Saudi Arabia build up industries that do not depend on oil.

4 But turning a beautiful picture into a real city is extremely difficult. Builders need huge quantities of materials, electricity and water. The desert creates extra challenges, and every part of the project has to be connected to services that work every single day, not just on the day the photographs are taken. Nobody has built a city of this size in a straight line before, so there are no older projects to copy and learn from.

5 In May 2026, Semafor reported that major work on The Line had been put off until after 2030. That did not mean the entire project had officially been cancelled. However, it raised new questions about whether the original 170-kilometre plan would ever be finished in the way it was announced.

6 The story is about more than one country or one expensive project. It asks what should happen when an exciting idea turns out to be too costly or too complicated. Costs can also go up while the work goes on, so a plan that looked affordable at the start may become impossible later. Is it better to make a dream smaller, or to keep trying to build something nobody has ever built before?

Sources: Semafor. Picture: AI illustration.

4 True, false or not given

Circle **T** (true), **F** (false) or **NG** (the article does not say).

1. Construction workers have been sent home. T F NG
2. The Line forms part of a larger plan called NEOM. T F NG
3. The Line was planned to be 170 kilometres long. T F NG
4. The project was officially cancelled in May 2026. T F NG
5. Fast transport would take residents from one part of the city to another in about an hour. T F NG

5 Vocabulary

Complete the sentences with words from the box. Two words are not needed.

affordable **attract** **cancelled** **challenges** **distance** **quantities** **repair**

1. A new stadium would _____ thousands of visitors to the town.
2. Most families can buy these homes because the prices are _____ .
3. Building a city needs huge _____ of cement and steel.
4. The concert was _____ because of the storm.
5. Learning a new language brings many _____ for adults.

6 Verb forms

Write the correct form of the verb in brackets.

1. Imagine a city that _____ 170 kilometres long. **(BE)**
2. The Line _____ as part of NEOM. **(INTRODUCE)**
3. Designers _____ a completely new way of life. **(IMAGINE)**
4. Nobody _____ a city of this size in a straight line before. **(BUILD)**
5. In May 2026, a report _____ that major work had been put off. **(SAY)**

7 Language focus: linking words

Complete the sentences with words from the box. Two words are not needed. A linking word joins two ideas. Use but for a difference, so for a result, and because for a reason.

because	but	despite	however	or	so	unless

1. The pictures looked wonderful, _____ building the real city is very hard.
2. The old road to the site was closed, _____ the workers took the train.
3. Work was put off _____ the cost was too high.
4. The project was not cancelled. _____, people asked if it would ever be finished.
5. In the new city, people can walk _____ take a fast train.

SPEAK

8 Talk about it

Discuss in pairs or small groups. Give reasons for your answers.

1. What would you ask the people behind a huge new city before moving there?
2. Can a city designed on paper leave room for unexpected ways of living?
3. Would you rather improve an existing city or build a new one?

9 Role-play: shrink the city or keep the dream

Work in pairs. Read your card, then have the conversation. Swap roles and do it again.

Student A · the government adviser

You want to keep the full 170-kilometre plan. Explain why the idea is important. Answer your partner's worries and try to agree a plan.

Student B · the finance officer

You think the city is too costly. You want to make it smaller or wait until after 2030. Ask about the cost and offer a compromise.

Useful phrases

I'm worried about the cost.

We can't give up on this dream now.

What would that mean for the people who live there?

Could we start with a smaller version?

I'd rather wait than waste the money.

Let's agree on a plan we can both support.

Afterwards, tell the class: did you keep the big plan, shrink it or put it off, and why?

ANSWER KEY

2 Key words

1 F · 2 G · 3 D · 4 E · 5 C · 6 H · 7 B · 8 A

4 True, false or not given

1 NG · 2 T · 3 T · 4 F · 5 F

5 Vocabulary

1 attract · 2 affordable · 3 quantities · 4 cancelled · 5 challenges

6 Verb forms

1 is · 2 was introduced · 3 imagined · 4 has built · 5 said

7 Language focus

1 but · 2 so · 3 because · 4 However · 5 or

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