Exercise 6

The article has five paragraphs, A–E. Read the article and match the paragraphs with the headings. There are two extra headings.

Paragraph A

One of the key challenges facing the world is going to be coping with the hundreds of millions who will flock to the growing number of overpopulated megacities, especially in developing countries. This has received a great deal of media attention; books have been written, conferences organised and committees established to debate the causes of urbanisation, and more importantly, what can be done to improve the fate of those making the move into these continually growing conurbations. But the same is not true of a second, and closely related trend, which raises a serious dilemma: what to do about the cities that are losing people.

Paragraph B

A drop in a city's population usually leads to a few empty or boarded-up and unoccupied homes, hardly enough to make the headlines or raise eyebrows. But they're hardly unusual. One in ten US cities is actually shrinking. In Japan, larger cities are thriving – and growing – while many of the smaller ones are in decline, both demographically and economically. In Latvia, many young adults have turned remarkably anti-provincial and have headed for the capital, Riga, in large numbers, leaving a number of ghost towns. Almost silently, this trend is being repeated right across the globe, almost without anyone noticing. Several South Korean cities are also becoming smaller, and this trend will continue unless birth rates there increase.

Paragraph C

That's just the thing: once a place starts getting smaller, the decline tends to continue. There are several explanations for this. When young adults leave the town of their birth and don't return, the town loses not just those adults, but also the children that they would have had later had they stayed. As populations drop, the average age of the inhabitants increases until most people are post-childbearing age. This is what has happened to towns like Christchurch in the UK. It's a vicious cycle; it means, of course, fewer youngsters to bring down the average age, and consequently, the trend gathers momentum and accelerates. Additionally, of course, higher average age is closely linked with increased mortality, with each death further reducing the population.

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Paragraph D

Many cities that are now declining relied heavily on a specific industry for the employment of a large portion of the workforce. A classic example is Detroit, once the centre of America's thriving car industry, but now a sparsely populated urban wasteland. Flint, another ex-industrial powerhouse, can no longer provide the jobs its residents need and so many have left, driven away by unemployment and the prospect of better opportunities elsewhere. For others, a rural life has a greater appeal and this tempts them to leave the city; living in the countryside typically affords lower property prices, healthier living and lower rates of crime.

Paragraph E

It's this desire to enjoy many of the aspects of an imagined utopia that is prompting many urban dwellers to pack up and move out to the country. Once there, they can grow their own potatoes, have time to talk to their neighbours and not worry about what their kids are up to. Technological changes mean that for many professionals, there's not so much difference between being in the city and living miles from anywhere, as long as they have a car and a decent internet connection. Many city-to-country migrants, such as Helen Dobson, who recently moved out of Manchester, find that they have to put up with substandard wi-fi anyway – but that's a different story.

The reasons why populations fall	More common than you might think
The perks of rural life	The impact of migration on rural infrastructure
Divided generations	The effects of economic downturn
A widely publicised phenomenon	

1. Paragraph A	
2. Paragraph B	
3. Paragraph C	
4. Paragraph D	
5. Paragraph E	

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