



### Introduction

1. The Royal Town Planning Institute (RTPI) is very pleased to respond to the Minister for Decentralisation's invitation to organisations and individuals to offer their pre-consultation suggestions to the Department on what priorities and policies it might adopt to produce a shorter, more decentralised and less bureaucratic National Planning Policy Framework.
2. The RTPI has over 23,000 members who work in the public, private, voluntary and education sectors. It is a charity whose purpose is to develop the art and science of town planning for the benefit of the public. The RTPI develops and shapes policy affecting the built environment, works to raise professional standards and supports members through continuous education, practice advice, training and development. We run Planning Aid in England – supporting communities and individuals through a locally-based network of 1,200 RTPI members who give their time and expertise free of charge – a service at the heart of localism.
3. The RTPI has a long history of supporting the need for a national planning framework for England. In October 2000 the RTPI published *The United Kingdom Spatial Planning Framework: A Discussion*<sup>1</sup>, which was designed to promote and inform a debate on a national spatial framework. In 2006 it published a report – *Uniting Britain*<sup>2</sup> – which looked at available data to start mapping spatial aspects of national policy.
4. This response to the Minister's call for suggestions deals with the form and content of the proposed NPPF. It does not deal with the question of the relationship between the NPPF and the Localism Bill and other national statements or any 'hierarchy of plans'. This is being addressed through other work by the RTPI – notably in suggesting amendments to the Localism Bill.

### The Government's view of the NPPF

5. It is worth briefly setting out the Government's own stated view of the nature of an NPPF as this will guide thinking on the possible content of this document. This is set out in [Appendix 1](#), below. The broad outline of the Government's intended content for the NPPF can be built up from these statements. It will set out:
  - the Government's economic, environmental and social priorities in an integrated way;
  - the roles of the planning system in delivering these;
  - a presumption in favour of sustainable development as a basis for strong basis for economic growth;
  - the strategic elements of the development plan;
  - other policies to provide the framework for local and neighbourhood planning.

#### footnotes

<sup>1</sup> Wong, Cecilia et al (2000) *The United Kingdom Spatial Planning Framework: A Discussion*, RTPI  
<http://www.rtpi.org.uk/download/747/The-United-Kingdom-Spatial-Planning-Framework-A-Discussion.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> Wong, Cecilia, et al (2007) *Uniting Britain*, RTPI  
<http://www.rtpi.org.uk/download/241/spatial2.pdf>

## The RTPI view

6. The RTPI's response looks at the five characteristics of the NPPF set out above. The RTPI's conclusions from the analysis below are summarised here.

- **The National Planning Policy Framework should briefly set out the value of planning in delivering national and community objectives, and the general form and functions of plan-making, development management, implementation and enforcement; and make reference to the relationship between the NPPF and other plans and strategies.**
- **It should be structured around themes explicitly related to delivering key government objectives, rather than the narrow and often insular land-use topics on which PPGs/PPSs have traditionally been based.**
- **It should look at how those themes and their constituent policies can be integrated both with each other and with cross-departmental priorities to address the key issues facing the nation.**
- **The great majority of policies will need to be sensitive to their differential impact and applicability to different parts of the country.**
- **It should bring together existing designations and physical constraints as well as policies.**
- **The definition of sustainable development has largely been established – it is more important for the NPPF to show how this is achieved in practice.**
- **This will need to reflect the UK's national and international commitments and demonstrate how local and neighbourhood planning should contribute to achieving those.**
- **The NPPF should set out strategic matters of national importance and establish the nature of local plans in terms of, for example, their evidence base.**
- **But it should not restrict a local planning authority's ability to define its own local strategic elements alongside those defined nationally to guide neighbourhood planning.**
- **Whilst the NPPF should set out the Government's broad policy framework, it does not need to address the full range of these elements in its first iteration. It should be a dynamic document that builds up its evidence and policy base over time and which has the ability and commitment to address developing challenges and opportunities as they arise.**

7. In coming to these conclusions, the RTPI has been informed by a meeting of its General Assembly and a workshop held for members of its Networks and by the thinking in other responses to the Ministerial call. Notably, the ideas put forward by Professors Vincent Goodstadt and Cecilia Wong and others from Manchester University who worked on the original reports on national planning commissioned by the RTPI show one thought-provoking way ahead for the NPPF and we commend that response in particular.
8. The RTPI is very keen to continue to work with Government and to develop thinking on the form and content of the NPPF and to provide further information and thinking on any of the points raised in this response.

### *Economic and environmental priorities and the roles of the planning system*

9. The RTPI agrees that the NPPF should set out the Government's economic, environmental and social priorities in an integrated way. We stress, however, that social priorities are an integral part of this and must also be addressed in the NPPF.
10. This overall approach supports the RTPI's view that the NPPF should be structured around the key issues or themes on which the government intends to deliver through planning – such as sustainable economic growth and community development, rather than on the topics that have traditionally formed the basis of existing PPSs/PPGs. These should therefore go beyond the traditional remits of national physical planning to address issues such as health and food security, and would require considered inputs from Government Departments other than CLG. Thus, the NPPF would be one of the delivery mechanisms for the Coalition Agreement and for the localism agenda.
11. The NPPF provides a real opportunity to set out and focus on the Government's view of its overriding challenges, opportunities and priorities in an integrated way that deals with, for example, the relationship between transport investment and sustainable economic growth and housing development and social cohesion. Such an approach is preferable to the traditional approach epitomised by existing PPSs which take a narrow topic-based approach without necessarily relating these topics to the key issues that the Government wishes to address or to the cross policy area approach that is needed to tackle them.
12. The need for an issue-based approach can be illustrated by two examples from stated Government policy. The Government has stated that its:  
*... economic ambition is to create a fairer and more balanced economy - one that is not so dependent on a narrow range of economic sectors, is driven by private sector growth and has new business opportunities that are more evenly balanced across the country and between industries. The Government is therefore determined that all parts of the country benefit from sustainable economic growth.*<sup>3</sup>
13. To support this ambition, the NPPF should specifically address those Government policies that are focussed on different parts of the country – for example on re-balancing the economy, the development of economic clusters and a brief statement on the roles that different areas, such as major metropolitan areas do, and will, play in economic development. Thus, the NPPF would provide a clear context and framework for the work and priorities of Local Enterprise Partnerships and investors in infrastructure, services and enterprise as well as local councils.
14. Importantly, it would also need to recognise that nearly all national policy decisions have different impacts in different parts of the country and these impacts would need to be spelt out<sup>4</sup>. Such decisions include, for example, investment in major research centres<sup>5</sup>. Indeed, it may be rare for the NPPF to have 'one-size-fits-all' policy.

#### *footnotes*

<sup>3</sup> HM Government (2010) *Local growth: realising every place's potential*, Cm 7961 TSO, October  
<http://www.bis.gov.uk/assets/biscore/economic-development/docs/l/cm7961-local-growth-white-paper.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> There are developing methods of assessing the impacts of policies on different areas – generically termed Territorial Impact Assessment and the RTPI would be pleased to discuss this further – drawing on its own research.

15. It would also need to address the role that planning can play in promoting different sectors of the economy. This would apply, for example, to promoting small businesses through the development of innovation clusters or the promotion of locally based retailers through a town centre first policy and development management.
16. It would lead to more informed decisions by Ministers and Parliament if specific national proposals such as HS2 and the locations of the programme of new nuclear power stations were brought together in the NPPF, which could set them in a wider context and relate them to, for example, nationally published networks such as strategic national transport corridors<sup>6</sup>.
17. As another example, the Government is already committed to: *maintaining the Green Belt, Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) and other environmental protections, and create a new designation – similar to SSSIs – to protect green areas of particular importance to local communities.*
18. In order to support this, the NPPF provides an opportunity to bring together all the existing designations that inform decisions on major planning issues. These include national designations such as National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, and international designations such as World Heritage Sites and Ramsar Sites. It would also lead to more informed policy and decision making if existing recognised geographic constraints on development were set out. These include flood plains and areas of water stress. All these designations and constraints are already available and simply need bringing together.

#### *A Presumption in favour of Sustainable Development*

19. The RTPI believes that it would not be constructive or effective to engage in a major process of trying to re-define the term ‘sustainable development’ for the purposes of the NPPF. There are already a number of accepted and workable definitions embodied in Government guidance and in practice. These are discussed in [Appendix 3](#). The most commonly accepted definition is that of the Brundtland Commission in 1987: *development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.*
20. It should be noted that this definition focuses on the type of development that is required rather than trying to define ‘sustainable’. This still provides a sound basis for a focussed working definition but it does need to be updated to take into account the immediate imperatives of climate change<sup>7</sup> and peak oil, and to make it clear that sustainable development needs to be looked at in terms of development decisions not compromising the abilities of other communities to meet their own needs, as well as future generations.
21. It is more important for the NPPF to demonstrate how the achievement of sustainable development is to be recognised and measured in practice in ways that are seen to be

#### *footnotes (cont.)*

<sup>5</sup> For example, Communities & Local Government/Experian plc (2011) *Updating the evidence base on English cities: Final Report*, DCLG, January provides useful statistics on research investment in different parts of England: <http://www.communities.gov.uk/documents/regeneration/pdf/1829875.pdf>

<sup>6</sup> see the Department for Transport’s 2008 *Delivering a Sustainable Transport System* <https://www.liftshare.com/business/pdfs/Dft%20-%20Delivering%20a%20Sustainable%20Transport%20System%20-%202008.pdf>

<sup>7</sup> See the RTPI’s *Seven Commitments on Climate Change* <http://www.rtpi.org.uk/item/2624/23/5/3>

objective and related to everyday life. So that, for example, those preparing plans for sustainable neighbourhoods can apply the overall principle to their areas. The NPPF will, therefore, need to show in accessible terms, what sustainable development means in practice in, for example, housing, transport, and economic development as well as in environmental protection and improvement.

22. This framework does not have to take the form of a series of targets. Whilst the RTPI recognises that the Government has moved away from nationally imposed targets, it must also be recognised that there are already targets embodied in national legislation – notably in the 2008 Climate Change Act that: *It is the duty of the Secretary of State to ensure that the net UK carbon account for the year 2050 is at least 80% lower than the 1990 baseline*<sup>8</sup>, and in international obligations – notably in the 2008 EU Directive on renewable energy which gives the UK a target of 15 per cent renewable by 2020.
23. One approach to setting standards is given by the U.S. Lead Standards<sup>9</sup> applying to food, air, water and paint. These are not mandatory but form one means of establishing how local areas are performing in meeting nationally agreed ambitions and international duties.

#### *The strategic elements of the development plan*

24. The RTPI welcomes the fact that the local development framework will establish the strategic framework within which neighbourhood planning will take place. The NPPF has a clear role in setting out national aspirations and commitments in terms of such issues as housing, employment or waste recycling – either in figures or as policy – in order to provide the context for local and neighbourhood planning. The Government has already announced, for example: *categories of development [which] are more appropriately planned at a higher spatial scale than a neighbourhood and would therefore be excluded from a Neighbourhood Plan*<sup>10</sup>;
25. It would not be in the spirit of localism for the NPPF to be too rigid in imposing a definition of the strategic element on local planning authorities. It must remain open for authorities to set out what they consider to be strategic in terms of neighbourhood planning, taking into account their own knowledge of the challenges and opportunities in their areas.
26. The NPPF does, however, have an important role in establishing the type of plans that are needed at the local level in terms of their evidence base, including the establishment of need, their transparency and their inclusivity.

#### *footnotes*

<sup>8</sup> Sec. 1(1): <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2008/27/section/1>

<sup>9</sup> [http://www.atsdr.cdc.gov/csem/lead/pb\\_standards2.html](http://www.atsdr.cdc.gov/csem/lead/pb_standards2.html)

<sup>10</sup> for example:

- *development which would breach thresholds for EU Directives*
- *nationally significant infrastructure projects*
- *minerals and most waste development*
- *large scale housing and economic development*

DCLG (2011) *Localism Bill: neighbourhood plans and community right to build: Impact assessment*

<http://www.communities.gov.uk/documents/localgovernment/pdf/1829678.pdf>

## The Nature of the NPPF

27. It may appear that this response and the responses of other organisations to the Minister's call for views, sets out a major resource-intensive task. Two important points need to be made on this. First, the elements of the NPPF that are set out in this RTPI response draw very largely on work that has already been done and is in the public domain. Further, the RTPI believes that the act of drawing the existing policy base together will in itself, produce added value in showing where policies re-inforce each other and in providing greater clarity and certainly for local communities, investors, developers and decision takers.
28. Secondly, whilst the NPPF should set out the Government's broad policy framework, it does not need to address the full range of these elements in its first iteration. It should be a dynamic document that builds up its evidence and policy base over time and which has the ability and commitment to address developing challenges and opportunities as they arise.
29. Finally, the NPPF can be a streamlined document by separating key strategic policy clearly from background, evidence and practice guidance, using more detailed technical notes and appendices – whether separate from or bound with the NPPF – where these are necessary, building on the good practice of more recent PPSs; the RTPI can help advise on the distinction to be drawn. The NPPF can also usefully be the government's key statement of the value, purpose and operation of planning, building on the statements currently contained in PPS1.

# Appendices

---

## Appendix 1: The Government's view of the NPPF

- 1.1 The idea for a 'National Planning Framework' was put forward in the Conservatives pre-election Green Paper on planning - *Open Source Planning*<sup>11</sup>. This stated that:  
*We will integrate into one document – a national planning framework – the principal features of all national planning policies. This simple and consolidated framework will set out not only what the government's economic and environmental priorities are, but how they relate to each other.*
- 1.2 This proposal was brought into the Conservative Party Manifesto - *Invitation to join the Government of Britain*<sup>12</sup> which stated that:  
*At the national level, for all forms of development, we will publish and present to Parliament for debate a simple and consolidated national planning framework, which will set out national economic and environmental priorities.*
- 1.3 The Coalition Agreement, published on 20th May 2010<sup>13</sup>, stated that:  
*We will publish and present to Parliament a simple and consolidated national planning framework covering all forms of development and setting out national economic, environmental and social priorities.*
- 1.4 The Ministerial Statement to House of Commons on 20<sup>th</sup> December<sup>14</sup> stated that:  
*The national planning policy framework will set out the Government's views on how the planning system in England can contribute to the delivery of a prosperous, competitive and attractive country based on the values of freedom, fairness and responsibility. The framework will set broad economic, environmental and social priorities and how they relate to each other, but will ensure that the majority of planning decisions are made at the local level, with the minimum of interference from Whitehall. The framework will also set out a strong basis for economic growth, a presumption in favour of sustainable development, as well as any further policy needed to establish and implement neighbourhood plans.*

*The Government will apply the following principles when considering what the framework should contain. The framework will be:*

- *localist in its approach, handing power back to local communities to decide what is right for them;*

### footnotes

- <sup>11</sup> Conservative Policy Green Paper No.14  
[http://www.conservatives.com/News/News\\_stories/2010/02/New\\_homes\\_and\\_jobs\\_through\\_Open\\_Source\\_Planning.aspx](http://www.conservatives.com/News/News_stories/2010/02/New_homes_and_jobs_through_Open_Source_Planning.aspx)
- <sup>12</sup> [http://media.conservatives.s3.amazonaws.com/manifesto/cpmanifesto2010\\_hires.pdf](http://media.conservatives.s3.amazonaws.com/manifesto/cpmanifesto2010_hires.pdf)
- <sup>13</sup> HM Government (2010) *The Coalition: our programme for government*  
[http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/media/409088/pfg\\_coalition.pdf](http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/media/409088/pfg_coalition.pdf)
- <sup>14</sup> Hansard 20 Dec 2010 : Column 145WS  
<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201011/cmhansrd/cm101220/wmstext/101220m0001.htm#1012204000019>

- *used as a mechanism for delivering Government objectives only where it is relevant, proportionate and effective to do so; and*
- *user-friendly and accessible, providing clear policies on making robust local and neighbourhood plans and development management decisions.*

- 1.5 The DCLG's Localism Bill Impact assessment on neighbourhood plans<sup>15</sup> states that:  
*A neighbourhood plan would be established within the context of a local planning authority's development plan and within parameters defined in national planning policy. .... The Localism Bill will therefore require that neighbourhood plans are in "general conformity" with the strategic elements of the development plan. The "strategic elements" will be defined through the National Planning Policy Framework and we expect that definition to include the scale (and broad location) of housing and economic development growth within the local plan area. .... Through the National Planning Policy Framework, housing numbers are to be deemed as a "strategic" policy in the local development framework and the neighbourhood plan is required to be in general conformity with all "strategic" policies.*
- 1.6 Other areas of government policy also suggest a broader role for the NPPF, such as the Public Health white paper "Healthy Lives, Healthy People: our strategy for public health in England" (November 2010), which states: "*DCLG will support local areas with streamlined planning policy that aligns social, economic, environmental and health priorities into one place. Health considerations are an important part of planning policy and DCLG will consider how to take this forward in the new National Planning Policy Framework*" (para 3.35, page 40)

## Appendix 2: Policy stances and intervention at national level

- 2.1 There are a number of Coalition Government policies which can be seen to pre-suppose some form of intervention at the national (English) level. These take two broad forms.
- 2.2 First are the relevant policies of the Government as a whole and of other Government Departments which will require a national view of spatial policy to implement them successfully. Notable policy areas that fall into this category are climate change mitigation and adaptation, the economy, energy, land utilisation and protection, minerals, transport, water, waste and public health.
- 2.3 The Government are already putting into place a framework of new policy documents on some of these key areas. For example, DEFRA launched a consultation on a natural environment White Paper on 26<sup>th</sup> July 2010<sup>16</sup> and of waste policy on 29<sup>th</sup> July<sup>17</sup>. The Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS) has published *A Strategy for Sustainable Growth*<sup>18</sup> on 20<sup>th</sup> July 2010 and the Government published *Local growth: realising every place's potential* in October 2010.

### footnotes

<sup>15</sup> DCLG (2011) *Localism Bill: neighbourhood plans and community right to build: Impact assessment*  
<http://www.communities.gov.uk/documents/localgovernment/pdf/1829678.pdf>

<sup>16</sup> <http://ww2.defra.gov.uk/our-responsibilities/nat-environment/>

<sup>17</sup> <http://www.defra.gov.uk/corporate/consult/waste-review/index.htm>

<sup>18</sup> [http://interactive.bis.gov.uk/comment/growth/files/2010/07/8782-BIS-Sustainable-Growth\\_WEB.pdf](http://interactive.bis.gov.uk/comment/growth/files/2010/07/8782-BIS-Sustainable-Growth_WEB.pdf)

- 2.4 Additionally, however, there are a number of extant national policy documents for these areas from the previous administration including, for example:
- The Government's 2009 *UK Low Carbon Transition Plan: national strategy for climate & energy*<sup>19</sup>;
  - The 2009 *UK Renewable Energy Strategy Consultation*<sup>20</sup>;
  - The Department for Transport's 2008 *Delivering a Sustainable Transport System*<sup>21</sup>; and
  - 2010 *High Speed Rail* documents<sup>22</sup>; and
  - DEFRA's 2008 *Future Water: The Government's Water Strategy for England*<sup>23</sup>.
- 2.5 It also needs to be borne in mind that some commitments such as reducing emissions and increasing the proportion of renewable energy are embodied in national legislation and/or international agreements. One key international obligation is that embedded in the 'Lisbon Treaty' which introduces the obligation to consider territorial cohesion<sup>24</sup> – an obligation that may best be achieved by undertaking some form of national planning framework.
- 2.6 The second form of such policies is those that are more specific. These include commitments in the Coalition Agreement<sup>25</sup> including, for example:
- *We will mandate a national recharging network for electric and plug-in hybrid vehicles.*
  - *We will maintain the Green Belt, Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) and other environmental protections, and create a new designation – similar to SSSIs – to protect green areas of particular importance to local communities.*
  - *We will cancel the third runway at Heathrow and We will refuse permission for additional runways at Gatwick and Stansted.*

### footnotes

- <sup>19</sup> [http://www.decc.gov.uk/en/content/cms/publications/lc\\_trans\\_plan/lc\\_trans\\_plan.aspx](http://www.decc.gov.uk/en/content/cms/publications/lc_trans_plan/lc_trans_plan.aspx)
- <sup>20</sup> [http://www.decc.gov.uk/en/content/cms/consultations/cons\\_res/cons\\_res.aspx](http://www.decc.gov.uk/en/content/cms/consultations/cons_res/cons_res.aspx)
- <sup>21</sup> <https://www.liftshare.com/business/pdfs/Dft%20-%20Delivering%20a%20Sustainable%20Transport%20System%20-%202008.pdf>
- <sup>22</sup> <http://www.dft.gov.uk/pgr/rail/pi/highspeedrail/>
- <sup>23</sup> <http://www.defra.gov.uk/environment/quality/water/strategy/pdf/future-water.pdf>
- <sup>24</sup> <http://www.rtpi.org.uk/item/3248>
- <sup>25</sup> HM Government (2010) *The Coalition: our programme for government*  
[http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/media/409088/pfg\\_coalition.pdf](http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/media/409088/pfg_coalition.pdf)

## Appendix 3: the Definition of Sustainable Development

- 3.1 The most universally used definition of sustainable development (see the quote from PPS1, below) is derived from the 1987 report on the UN World Commission on Environment and Development<sup>26</sup> – the ‘Brundtland Report’. This is development that: *meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.*
- 3.2 This definition raises a number of issues. The first one is that it has become clear in the nearly quarter of a century since this definition was drafted, that this issue is no longer just inter-generational – important as this is – but is inter-community (defined either on a geographic or on a socio-economic basis). It is already apparent that, globally, it is the poorer communities that are most at risk from, for example, rises in sea levels and extreme weather. It is also clear that Governments, even in the UK, are having to make choices about which geographical communities to protect and which to let go.
- 3.3 Secondly, it is worth looking at the whole of the Brundtland Commission statement<sup>27</sup> from which the short definition is taken, in order to show that the Commission did not consider sustainable development either to be antipathetic to economic growth or to imply that other global injustices – notably poverty - should not be tackled<sup>28</sup>.
- 3.4 The definition to which the planning system currently works is contained in DCLG’s Planning Policy Statement (PPS) 1<sup>29</sup>. This states that:
- At the heart of sustainable development is the simple idea of ensuring a better quality of life for everyone, now and for future generations. A widely used definition was drawn up by the World Commission on Environment and Development: “development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.”*
- The Government set out four aims for sustainable development in its 1999 strategy<sup>30</sup>:*
- *social progress which recognises the needs of everyone;*
  - *effective protection of the environment;*
  - *the prudent use of natural resources; and,*
  - *the maintenance of high and stable levels of economic growth and employment.*

### footnotes

<sup>26</sup> Report of the World Commission on Environment and Development: *Our Common Future* 1987

<http://www.un-documents.net/wced-ocf.htm>

<sup>27</sup> *Humanity has the ability to make development sustainable to ensure that it meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. The concept of sustainable development does imply limits - not absolute limits but limitations imposed by the present state of technology and social organization on environmental resources and by the ability of the biosphere to absorb the effects of human activities. But technology and social organization can be both managed and improved to make way for a new era of economic growth. The Commission believes that widespread poverty is no longer inevitable. Poverty is not only an evil in itself, but sustainable development requires meeting the basic needs of all and extending to all the opportunity to fulfil their aspirations for a better life. A world in which poverty is endemic will always be prone to ecological and other catastrophes.*

<sup>28</sup> Dr Anna Tibaijuka, Executive Director of UN Habitat, told the RTPI’s Planning Convention that:

*“Concerns in the North about climate change, can be motivated by a desire to keep things the way they are, and mean little to people for whom the dystopia has already arrived, and for whom keeping things the way they are holds little appeal. It might be contended that the urban poor in developing countries will be those most adversely affected by climate change ... this environmental argument does not go far enough.”*

<sup>29</sup> ODPM (2005) *PPS1 Delivering Sustainable Development*, HMSO

<http://www.communities.gov.uk/documents/planningandbuilding/pdf/planningpolicystatement1.pdf>

<sup>30</sup> The 1999 Sustainable Development Strategy mentioned in the quote above was updated in 2005

[http://www.defra.gov.uk/sustainable/government/publications/uk-strategy/documents/SecFut\\_complete.pdf](http://www.defra.gov.uk/sustainable/government/publications/uk-strategy/documents/SecFut_complete.pdf).

*These aims should be pursued in an integrated way through a sustainable, innovative and productive economy that delivers high levels of employment, and a just society that promotes social inclusion, sustainable communities and personal well being, in ways that protect and enhance the physical environment and optimise resource and energy use.*

- 3.5 Some practitioners look to definitions that are already embodied in legislation – notably in New Zealand’s 1991 Resource Management Act<sup>31</sup>. This Act in particular is used by those who argue that the purpose of planning should be embodied in legislation. This Act states that:
- 5 (1)The purpose of this Act is to promote the sustainable management of natural and physical resources.*
- (2)In this Act, **sustainable management** means managing the use, development, and protection of natural and physical resources in a way, or at a rate, which enables people and communities to provide for their social, economic, and cultural well-being and for their health and safety while—*
- (a) sustaining the potential of natural and physical resources (excluding minerals) to meet the reasonably foreseeable needs of future generations; and*
- (b) safeguarding the life-supporting capacity of air, water, soil, and ecosystems; and*
- (c) avoiding, remedying, or mitigating any adverse effects of activities on the environment.*

### Sustainable Communities

- 3.6 An interrelated concept is that of ‘sustainable communities’ and it is relevant to think whether the presumption should be in favour of sustainable communities rather than sustainable development. This would place the presumption more closely within the concept of localism as it would bring in aspects such as local economic development, vibrant communities, community engagement and democratic involvement and community safety.
- 3.7 Again, there are already workable definitions existing. One of the key ones is from the 2004 Egan Review of Skills for Sustainable Communities<sup>32</sup>, and later agreed under the UK’s presidency of the European Union in December 2005. This is that:
- Sustainable communities meet the diverse needs of existing and future residents, their children and other users, contribute to a high quality of life and provide opportunity and choice. They achieve this in ways that make effective use of natural resources, enhance the environment, promote social cohesion and inclusion and strengthen economic prosperity.*
- 3.8 Perhaps more importantly, sustainable communities are defined in the Egan Review through a



‘wheel’ (left). As can be seen, this takes a much more comprehensive view of the term ‘sustainable’ and its relevance to a localist agenda is clear.

Royal Town Planning Institute  
The RTPI is a charity registered in England (262865) and Scotland (SC 037841)

### footnotes

31 [http:// www.legislation.govt.nz/act/public/1991/0069/latest/DLM231905.html](http://www.legislation.govt.nz/act/public/1991/0069/latest/DLM231905.html)

32 <http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/communities/eganreview>