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BRIEFING



DELIVERING GREAT PLACES IN DIFFICULT TIMES: SUPPORTING DELIVERY AND HARNESSING RESOURCES

INTRODUCTION

This Briefing is one of a series of three published by RTPI Scotland looking at how planners and the planning system can help to deliver great places in difficult times. The paper has been written after discussion at a *Convenor's Colloquium* discussion dinner which brought together key influencers and experts to come up with solutions, ideas, innovation and good practice. These were organised by RTPI Scotland and sponsored by Halcrow, a CH2M Hill Company.

The paper summarises the points raised by those participating in the discussion. These are set out to help stimulate discussion and debate on future approaches to delivering great places and so do not necessarily represent the views of RTPI Scotland, Halcrow or all of the participants in the discussion.

VALUE AND VISION

This paper focuses on "Delivery and Resources" asking questions such as:

- What are the barriers to development delivery?
- What funding and financing models would work in Scotland?
- What is required, by whom, to make any new models work?
- What can planners and the planning system do to help?

BARRIERS

The first question asked was what the barriers were to development delivery? Key points raised included:

- **Skills and Confidence:** There is a need to invest in planners' skills and knowledge of issues involved in development delivery and development economics. Delivering development depends upon a confident planning system and confident planners who can provide clarity and predictability for investors and developers. Planning authorities need to create a culture which allows this to happen and, as part of this, empower young planners.
- **Strategies:** Often there are too many different strategies in place which cover an area. These often include non-planning and development strategies which can still have an impact on the future of a place. There is a need to ensure that there is clarity on the proposed way forward for an area.
- **Culture change:** Planning needs to be about facilitating development – the right development in the right place at the right time. It needs to be seen to have an 'open for business culture'. This may involve reviewing approaches to conditions and restrictions as part of a strategy to minimise risk for developers. Is there a reluctance to embrace new thinking and approaches?
- **Places:** We need to bear in mind that planning is about places, areas and neighbourhoods, not just individual buildings. Planning should be acting as the mechanism to stitch these buildings together and provide a context for them.
- **Influence:** Planning is not at the 'top table' in most local authorities, with Heads of Planning now generally operate at third tier. This means that it can be difficult to maximise planning's influence corporately.
- **Focus:** Generally investment, planning and regeneration strategies take a 'balanced' approach to areas. Is there a need to focus investment and development on 'winners' and those areas which can make the biggest difference? Would this be politically acceptable?
- **Finance:** There is very little private sector investment going on at present. This means that the public sector may need to take a bigger leadership role, although this is difficult as Scottish Government and local authorities have limited borrowing powers.
- **Visibility of good place making:** The best place making is often not given the visibility it deserves. We need to get better at showcasing the good schemes to politicians, funders, investors and developers.

FUNDING MODELS

The second question asked what funding and financing models would work in Scotland? Key points raised included:

- **Central Infrastructure Team:** There is need to ensure that the different interests and providers of infrastructure were joined up and pulling in the same direction. Is there a possibility of establishing a central infrastructure team in Scottish Government to oversee the planning, financing and delivery of infrastructure across Scotland?
- **Business Planning and Masterplanning:** Masterplans must be deliverable and so need to be joined up with the business planning process (and vice versa).
- **Development Charges:** There is potential in exploring models of development charges based upon work already undertaken by Scottish Government. This should build on recent research and example of good practice including the FIRS model adopted in Aberdeenshire. Future models needed to be based upon the concept of allowing developers to 'pay as you sell' rather than 'pay in advance'. This relies on good planning and identifying where benefits can be accrued.
- **Financing Models:** A number of new(ish) financing models should be supported in the future including Tax Incremental Financing, Prudential Borrowing through local authorities, JESSICA, National Housing Trust and Municipal Bonds. However these rely on strong, steady income streams which, in turn, rely on certainty and predictability. The planning system has an important role in helping to provide certainty.
- **Placemaking:** The planning service has an important role in helping to deliver development and in ensuring that this development was to a high quality in terms of design and placemaking.
- **Place picking:** The planning system can help to identify those places where investment will have the greatest impact. This can help to make sure that resources are used to best effect.
- **Planning Powers:** Should local authorities be more proactive and have more powers to intervene? Could they better support development delivery through powers of designation or through incentivising? Would financial and non-financial incentives work?

MAKING IT WORK

The final questions asked what is required, by whom, to make any new models work and what can planners and the planning system do to help? Key points raised included:

- **Political Leadership:** Political leadership is essential, particularly at a national level through Scottish Government. The National Infrastructure Plan will be an important document which should set out investment priorities.

- **Best Place Selection:** There is a need to focus investment so as to ensure that we maximise benefit. Planning has a key role to play in this through identifying these places and putting in place strategies which support them. This could be driven through undertaking 'Inquiry by Infrastructure' programmes which identify existing infrastructure, future needs, and, possible investment to assess the deliverability of a development alongside the investment requirements.
- **Partnership:** Joint working between the public and private sectors is vital. The public sector can help to confront the requirements of private sector through providing the resources needed and mitigating risk. This should be seen as the public sector taking leadership through 'taking public action'.
- **Efficiency:** There is a need to continually make sure that the resources and money which were 'in the system' were being used to best effect.
- **Joint Solutions:** Scotland's scale means that it should be relatively easy to bring the key interests and players together to ensure that a joined up, coherent approach was taken delivering development and great places. The ability to align strategies, resources and funding should not be underestimated.
- **Urgency:** There was no silver bullet solution to the issues faced in delivering development and great places. However the urgency of the situation means that we can't wait around for the perfect model to emerge. The public sector needs to take the lead and drive forward solutions in partnership with the private sector.
- **Planning is important:** Planners, planning and the planning system have a key role to play in delivering great places in difficult times. Plans should establish the vision and help to support delivery.

PARTICIPANTS

Those participating in the discussion were:

- Jamie Baxter, Director, Halcrow
- Fraser Carlin, Head of Planning, Renfrewshire Council
- George Eckton, Head of Environment and Regeneration, COSLA
- Thomas Glen, Head of Development and Enterprise, East Dunbartonshire Council
- Professor Stuart Gulliver, University of Glasgow
- Jim Mackinnon, Chief Planner, Scottish Government
- Ian Manson, Chief Executive, Clyde Gateway URC
- Craig McLaren, National Director, RTPi Scotland
- Joe Noble, Director, Strategic Development, Infrastructure and Sustainability, Macdonald Estates Group Plc
- Richard Slipper, Director of Planning, Development and Regeneration, GVA
- Stefano Smith, Regional Director, Halcrow

- David Suttie, Convenor, RTPi Scotland
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- maintain high standards of planning education
- develop and promote new thinking, ideas and approaches which can improve planning
- support our membership to work with others who have a role in developing places in Scotland
- improve the understanding of planning and the planning system to policy makers, politicians, practitioners and the general public.

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