

ROYAL TOWN PLANNING INSTITUTE

A NEW VISION FOR PLANNING

DELIVERING SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES, SETTLEMENTS AND PLACES

'Mediating Space - Creating Place'

THE NEED FOR ACTION

The Royal Town Planning Institute is promoting a programme of radical evolution, which will lead to a body so different that it will be seen as a New Institute; reaffirming our core values, whilst reinterpreting them to meet changing circumstances and new challenges. This paper sets the context for a dialogue with our own members and others about the way planning should evolve. The Institute will use the outcome of this discussion to guide its future operations and priorities.

THE NEED FOR CHANGE

For nearly a century the Royal Town Planning Institute has provided leadership in promoting the better planning of cities, towns and the countryside, in order to sustain the environment, and to develop economic and social well-being. These goals remain valid today, and require to be championed just as vigorously. However, the pace of change – social, technological, economic, environmental and political – has never been so fast, nor on such a large scale.

Managing the spatial dimension of this change depends on working with a growing variety of organisations and individuals, many of them with a global perspective. These relationships are becoming increasingly complex. Effective planning however cannot be delivered through governmental activity alone; all sectors of society share this responsibility.

A *New Vision of Planning* is required which seeks to build the capacity within society and its institutions to take effective and relevant decisions. This challenges us to think beyond the scope of statutory systems and to take a broader view of what society needs through planning. It also challenges us to see planning as an activity which professional planners facilitate, but do not own or monopolise.

THE NEW VISION FOR PLANNING

The *New Vision for Planning* sees planning as being about people and places, the natural and the built environment, immediate requirements and long-term stewardship. Its implications for the RTPI are profound - both for the focus of its work to promote planning and for its own organisation and structure. The *New Vision* will be developed through its members and through extensive consultation and dialogue with all potential partners. It is therefore a living and evolving document.

The *New Vision for Planning* is built around the core ideas of a planning that is :

- *Spatial* - dealing with the unique needs and characteristics of places
- *Sustainable* - looking at the short, medium and long term issues
- *Integrative* - in terms of the knowledge, objectives and actions involved
- *Inclusive* - recognising the wide range of people involved in planning

In all these matters *Planning* is :

- *Value-driven* - concerned with identifying, understanding and mediating conflicting sets of values
- *Action-oriented* - driven by the twin activities of mediating space and making of place.

SPATIAL PLANNING : SPACE AND PLACE

Planning involves twin activities : the management of the competing uses for space; and the making of places that are valued and have identity.

Our focus is on the location and quality of social, economic and environmental changes. In developing a *New Vision for Planning* we therefore use the term 'spatial planning'. We do so to emphasise that planning is as much concerned with the spatial requirements for, and impacts of, policies - even where these do not require a 'land-use' plan - as it is with land use zonings. The interrelationships, for example, of governmental policy can only be properly demonstrated by consideration of their aggregate impacts for specific places. 'Spatial planning' operates at all the different possible scales of activity, from large scale national or regional strategies to the more localised design and organisation of towns, villages and neighbourhoods.

SUCCESSFUL SPATIAL PLANNING IS SUSTAINABLE

Sustainable planning integrates the objectives of economic development, social justice and inclusion, environmental integrity and integrated transport. There is often conflict between short term economic and fiscal benefits and the longer term environmental and social implications arising from development. There is often no natural equilibrium between them. Planning must offer a means to mediate consciously between these competing objectives.

The resolution of these matters will require:

- Planning for the **long term** in order to effect the strategic shifts necessary to ensure change and to meet growing needs. As a corollary prudence requires us to take account of possible longer term consequences of action even where there is not yet unequivocal proof of adverse impacts. Planning decisions therefore cannot be based exclusively upon an open-ended presumption in favour of development.
- Planning for the **medium term** to ensure the careful consideration of social inequalities and wise use of natural resources. This must be based upon social as well as economic and environmental assessments to enable development impacts and requirements to be considered over their whole life-span.
- Planning for the **short term**, action orientated and responsive to changing circumstances and available opportunities, negotiating the directions of change set out in the longer term visions. This requires plans and planning to be integrated with delivery mechanisms, and to carry a genuine commitment to monitoring and review.

SUCCESSFUL SPATIAL PLANNING IS INTEGRATED

Too often plans are made and planning decisions are taken on a restrictive land-use basis, without proper integration with other policy objectives. Planning needs to be developed on a more consistent, cross-cutting and collaborative approach.

- Spatial planning should take account of a much **wider set of issues** currently excluded from statutory systems of land-use planning, for example, inequalities in health and education, energy policy, the rural economy and urban design;
- Spatial planning should integrate and be an integral part of **the full range of public, corporate and community strategies and initiatives**;
- Spatial planning should be carried out according to **coherent, functional areas** and at local, regional and national levels, rather than being constrained unnecessarily by artificial administrative areas; and
- Spatial planning should be **linked to delivery mechanisms** through the expenditure programmes of all relevant government and corporate agencies.
- Spatial Planning should bring together a **wider range of professional skills and disciplines**.

SUCCESSFUL SPATIAL PLANNING IS INCLUSIVE

The engagement of individuals and communities and regard for their respective rights have always been an integral part of planning processes. Public engagement in policy-making and action should engender partnership and collaboration, and enhance 'well being'. To achieve this, changes in the formal planning processes are required if we are to meet the expectations and aspirations for greater influence over the impacts of development and the quality of the environment.

Successfully-negotiated outcomes carry a greater commitment from the parties involved and create a greater likelihood of implementation. We need to recognise however that effective planning cannot always be achieved through consensus. Where hard choices are required, clear and equitable decision-making frameworks are essential.

We also need to understand that conflicts are often resolved through the established power structures in ways which disadvantage those most in need. Planning as a truly societal activity must seek to give a voice to those excluded communities - those with a direct interest in creating a better 'world' but little power to influence it.

Planning processes, policies and outcomes therefore need:

- to embrace more fully a **respect for differences**, notably of gender and ethnicity; changes should be considered to guarantee the rights of all to be included in the process;
- to reduce **social and spatial inequalities** and not create new ones
- to be negotiated through a process that is first *transparent*, and second subject to **independent scrutiny and arbitration**; and
- to result in a **shared commitment** to act upon the agreed outcomes of discussion, and to review and update plans;

NEXT STEPS TOWARDS A NEW INSTITUTE

Effective spatial planning is needed to provide a framework for agreeing visions of the future, analysing problems and opportunities, organising collaboration, setting policy and implementing action. It provides a framework for co-ordinating skills; seizing opportunities as they arise; and thinking strategically and acting locally.

Whilst the potential of spatial planning is not in doubt, the arrangements for planning in the future will need to be very different from today. Change is required in both the product and process of planning. So our agenda must be :

- to extend the scope of planning beyond a statutory land-use base, to help shape wider public policy debates;
- to develop new approaches to plan-making, linked more clearly to plan delivery through public programmes, clear and effective legal structures and understanding of the private sector corporate culture ;
- to extend its spatial perspective - nationally and internationally;
- to develop new skills and multidisciplinary expertise to underpin the new practice; and
- to encourage a new accord between the myriad of professional disciplines that help to guide the development of town and country.

Matching change in the RTPI is required, necessitating a complete review of its internal structures and external associations through :

- undertaking a Governance Review, with new approaches to audit and scrutiny
- considering the findings of the Education Commission - a complete review of qualification, education and training policies
- broadening the membership and entry qualifications of the RTPI to reflect the new scope of professional activity and establish new forms of membership association
- establishing new associations of interest with the public, voluntary and private sectors, other professions and other countries.