

EFFECTIVE PRACTICE IN SPATIAL PLANNING

SHAPING AND DELIVERING TOMORROW'S PLACES

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY*

The Effective Practice in Spatial Planning project was commissioned by the RTPI, CLG, Joseph Rowntree Foundation and the GLA and undertaken by UCL and Deloitte. The project has examined how spatial planning is being delivered by those involved in formulating the Regional Spatial Strategies and Local Development Frameworks that were introduced by the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004. The focus of the project has been on the outcomes of planning for places rather than the processes involved in preparing spatial plans. The project included practising planners and also local authority Chief Executives, Councillors and other public agencies involved in the development and delivery of the new approach.

A first requirement of the project was to clarify what spatial planning is about. PPS 1 explains that '*Spatial Planning goes beyond traditional land use planning to bring together and integrate policies for the development and use of land with other policies and programmes which influence the nature of places and how they function*' but it is apparent that amongst key participants including planners, councillors, senior local authority and other public sector managers that there is little common understanding what this means in practice. There is an urgent need to develop and elaborate develop spatial planning as a concept that like 'best value' for example, can encompass a wide range of activities and outcomes.

The project has found there is an evolving understanding of what spatial planning means in practice. This is summarised in the box below:

Spatial planning is the practice of place shaping and delivery at the local and regional levels that aims to:

- *Enable a vision for the future of regions and places that is based on evidence, local distinctiveness and community derived objectives;*
- *Translate this vision into a set of policies, priorities, programmes and land allocations together with the public sector resources to deliver them;*

- *Create a framework for private investment and regeneration that promotes economic, environmental and social well being for the area;*
- *Coordinate and deliver the public sector components of this vision with other agencies and processes (e.g. LAAs and MAAs).*

This understanding of spatial planning builds upon definitions that have been used by RTPI, CLG and academic experts in the field and it provides a basis for investigating how effectively spatial planning is being applied in practice. This meant considering the role of spatial planning within the wider context of on-going public sector reforms (these are summarised in the box below). The study found that the public sector is becoming more integrated between agencies including health, police, business support and voluntary organisations and revealed the vital and central role of planning in this fast changing environment.

Public Sector Reform context

The reform of the public sector provides a change in the context and role of spatial planning. The main influences are:

- The Lyons Inquiry and Place Shaping*
- Barker Review of Planning and Housing*
- Hampton Review of Regulation*
- Varney Review of Public Service Delivery*
- Stern Review of Climate Change*
- Eddington Review of Transport*
- Local Government White Paper*

The study worked with seven case study authorities, (five at local level and two at regional level) and found many instances where spatial planning has been effective thanks to well-developed joint working between public, private and voluntary sector partners. The main report draws on 22 case studies where this was achieved. The use of specialists to facilitate the discussion to help scope and visioning local community priorities and the establishment of joint working across the public sector were particularly important elements of effectiveness.

The study also found examples where evidence was shared at an early stage to support the allocation of land uses for different activities. Other examples illustrate programmes for providing social infrastructure that need to be implemented alongside other developments through various forms of planning

agreements. At the regional level, the creation of a Regional Infrastructure Programme, supported by a range of various public agencies, offered another effective approach to social infrastructure provision.

Work with the case study authorities led to the conclusion that, if it is to be effective, spatial planning must focus on:

- Outcomes before processes
- Users, partners and places
- Local community needs and preferences from the outset

The essential elements of effective spatial planning must include:

- A new role for planning within local authorities linked with other activities including Sustainable Community Strategies and Local Area Agreements
- A common evidence base and information repository shared between partners that is also accessible to the public
- The key role of development management in delivering tomorrow's places
- A Local Infrastructure Programme, together with a Local Infrastructure Fund and managed by a Local Infrastructure Group to deliver places through effective resource management and coordination
- A Regional Infrastructure Programme, together with a Regional Infrastructure Fund and Regional Infrastructure Group to deliver places through effective resource management and coordination
- Active horizontal and vertical integration between strategies, policies and resources for regions, sub-regions, localities and communities
- Provision of new skills and training for planners including MBAs and courses on project and programme management

The study has identified some of the barriers that constrain spatial planning from being more effective. One of the most important of these is the difficulty of ensuring that Chief Executives and Executive members in Local Authorities and leading politicians in Regional Assemblies recognise the key role that spatial planning has in shaping and delivering tomorrow's places.

At the national level an incomplete understanding of the new planning system within Government Departments and Government Offices has also hampered the delivery of spatial planning in the way the 2004 Act intended.

Another major barrier lies in planners' understanding of the role of spatial planning within the wider and rapidly changing public sector landscape. Although the intended role and scope of spatial planning is clear from the 'tests of soundness' set out by the Planning Inspectorate, it is not always well understood by practising planners. Some of the requirements of the 'tests of soundness' are poorly understood, particularly those covering local distinctiveness, evidence based approaches, and resources for delivery. This may have arisen, in part, from existing Government Guidance [PPS11, PPS12] which does not fully reflect current requirements and is resulting in emerging plans that are unduly inward focussed.

The main study report makes over 50 recommendations to a range of organisations to help develop more effective practice, overcome identified barriers and to improve the shaping and delivery of tomorrow's places. Key recommendations include:

- **CLG reviews of Planning Policy Statements should include more specific material and advice on the role of spatial planning within the joined up public sector and as part of the local Sustainable Community Strategy as one of the delivery vehicles.**
- **CLG, the RTPI and SOLACE should prepare a joint communications strategy for local authority Chief Executives on the role and requirements of spatial planning in their local authority wide programmes.**
- **DOH should prepare a Circular and letter to all Health Chief Executives to advise them of their need to engage in spatial planning processes as part of their infrastructure and capital programmes.**
- **DfES should prepare a Circular and letter to the whole education sector [schools, children, HE and FE] and their partners in programmes [e.g. Building Schools for the Future] to advise them of the importance of spatial approaches and their need to engage with it in their infrastructure and capital planning.**

- CLG should advise all Local Area Agreements of their need to integrate the LDF as part of their delivery machinery at local level.
- CLG should amend or supplement PPS11 and PPS12 to include the implications of resource, delivery and implementation requirements. This should explain the relationship between the LDF, the SCS, the LAA and other funding sources such as Planning Gain Supplement, environmental revenues and other private sector investment.
- Government Offices should manage their relationship with local authorities in an integrated way, and make the same official responsible for the LDF and the LAA.
- The roles of GOs and the Planning Inspectorate in the Local Development Scheme process should be clarified. GOs could concentrate on ensuring that good local public sector integration and consultation has been achieved, leaving PINS to concentrate on the regulatory role.
- Local Authorities should establish a local authority wide evidence base or repository for all data on social, environmental and economic characteristics and performance and on local opinion about priorities, preferences etc.
- Local Authorities should establish a Local Infrastructure Group [LIG] to translate the SCS, LDF and other planning requirements into a Local Infrastructure Programme [LIP] which is committed and resourced through the Local Infrastructure Fund [LIF].
- LAs should establish a more formal approach to managing planning gain and other funds being derived through the planning process, including identifying requirements identified by the SCS and LIP process.
- LAs should place all items required within Section 106 planning agreements, planning gain, tariff, roof tax or similar devices on a list of public Community Gain Requirements.

- **LAs should appoint a Community Delivery Auditor to monitor delivery of all planning gain agreements from the proceeds of the management levy on each agreement.**
- **RTPI should work with CLG to support the development and delivery of a specialist Planning MBA including modules on finance, HR, business processes, programme management and strategy**

The RTPI is currently developing a dissemination programme for this project in collaboration with its partners. It is anticipated this will include a formal launch and wide publicity in collaboration with its partners, dissemination through the PAS and RTPI, national and regional conferences and the preparation and distribution of training modules. Further details will be found on www.rtpi.org.uk when the report of the project is published in March.

* This is the draft Executive Summary of the final report of the Effective Practice in Spatial Planning Project which is due to be published in March 2007