



### The Royal Town Planning Institute and summary

1. The Royal Town Planning Institute (RTPI) represents 23,000 members worldwide who work in the public, private, charitable and education sectors and is the largest professional institute for planners in Europe. 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.
2. Investment in infrastructure in and of itself will not deliver the jobs we need, the infrastructure needs to be well planned in order to drive sustainable economic growth. Part of good planning is coordinating national level infrastructure investment with local initiatives.
3. The National Infrastructure Plan<sup>1</sup>, produced by Infrastructure UK, is notable for being among the most spatially informed Government publications. But the RTPI believes that much more could be done with cross-departmental support.
4. Bringing together government plans within a map-based overarching framework would allow policy-makers to make better judgements about how individual policy proposals interact with and affect development. Furthermore, such an approach would also increase consistency in appraisals, improve security and resilience, and would help better inform private sector investment strategies in industries which seek certainty in exchange for long-term financial commitment. Remarkably, there is no single place or data source within government that makes government maps and plans available to view.
5. The RTPI, in conjunction with software specialists Idox, has launched the Map for England<sup>2</sup> initiative. The Map is online at <http://www.idoxgroup.com/mapforengland/>. The site currently has 11 datasets on it, but already, to see the Map for England is to appreciate its potential.

### Optimising infrastructure investment

6. In straightened times it is particularly important to maximise the impact of what infrastructure investment is available. Not only is it good planning to look at investment in housing, transport, education, health and the environment in the round, it makes financial sense too when difficult choices between competing priorities are to be made.
7. It is widely recognised that investment has the power to unlock growth – a new road might unlock a previously stalled housing or employment site for instance – but it also has the potential to blight an area. By overlapping datasets, better informed decisions can be made.
8. Much of the infrastructure England relies on is in private ownership whose investment decisions rely, to a large extent, on assessing future need. It is therefore important that they have as much information about likely trends as possible. One effect of the Government's commitment to abolishing regional spatial strategies is that housing growth will be determined, to a large extent, by local authorities. If we want to ensure that areas that grow have reliable connections to water, power, transport and broadband networks, then data about areas which

#### footnotes

<sup>1</sup> 2011 and 2012 update [http://cdn.hm-treasury.gov.uk/national\\_infrastructure\\_plan291111.pdf](http://cdn.hm-treasury.gov.uk/national_infrastructure_plan291111.pdf), [http://www.hm-treasury.gov.uk/d/national\\_infrastructure\\_plan\\_051212.pdf](http://www.hm-treasury.gov.uk/d/national_infrastructure_plan_051212.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.rtpi.org.uk/knowledge/core-issues/map-for-england/>

are likely to grow needs to be captured somehow. It is essential that the Government's commitment to open data and transparency goes beyond simply opening up datasets; these datasets need to be brought together and made easily accessible.

9. A Map for England would benefit other private sector businesses beyond infrastructure providers. Housing developers, industry and business would be able to make quicker and better informed decisions which are more closely aligned to public sector infrastructure funding plans. For example, where can a business currently see which areas have high speed broadband, good transport connections, anticipated housing growth and are enterprise zones?

### Helping policy-makers and communities make better informed decisions

10. The Map for England project has already proved its worth to policy-makers, with findings quoted by the Rt Hon Michael Fallon MP<sup>3</sup> and Dr Roberta Blackman-Woods MP<sup>4</sup> in the committee stage of the Growth and Infrastructure Bill. Clause 8 of the Bill (Electronic communications code: the need to promote growth) is aimed at improving broadband coverage in rural areas, including National Parks. Maps of National Parks are widely available, and Ofcom produces maps indicating broadband coverage. The RTPI believes that its briefing note<sup>5</sup> was the first time that maps of broadband coverage and of National Park boundaries was overlaid.<sup>6</sup>
11. Importantly, bringing Government maps together in one place addresses the localist agenda, is pro-growth, and would be a practical and accessible illustration of good open government. A Map for England would help communities and the Government to make better informed decisions, not make the decisions for them.
12. Additionally, a Map for England would help coordinate infrastructure provision across our borders with Scotland and Wales.

### Contact the RTPI

If you require more detailed information please contact the RTPI.

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Royal Town Planning Institute

The RTPI is a charity registered in England (262865) and Scotland (SC 037841)

### footnotes

<sup>3</sup> [http://www.rtpi.org.uk/media/1722017/29\\_november\\_am.pdf](http://www.rtpi.org.uk/media/1722017/29_november_am.pdf) page 336: "There is an issue in the national parks. The evidence submitted by the Royal Town Planning Institute says that "it is clear that overall National Parks have some of the worst access to (availability of) superfast broadband in England, and National Parks in the North of England are particularly poorly served".

<sup>4</sup> [http://www.rtpi.org.uk/media/1722011/29\\_november.pdf](http://www.rtpi.org.uk/media/1722011/29_november.pdf) page 352: "[The Royal Town Planning Institute] notes that it is that the east of England appears to have a particular problem [with broadband coverage]"

<sup>5</sup> [http://www.rtpi.org.uk/media/1735838/rtpi\\_briefing\\_for\\_clause\\_7\\_of\\_growth\\_and\\_infrastructure\\_bill\\_committee\\_stage.pdf](http://www.rtpi.org.uk/media/1735838/rtpi_briefing_for_clause_7_of_growth_and_infrastructure_bill_committee_stage.pdf)

<sup>6</sup> Neither DCMS's recently published consultation nor its impact assessment does this either:

[http://www.culture.gov.uk/images/consultations/CONDOC\\_BB\\_Impact\\_Assessment\\_.pdf](http://www.culture.gov.uk/images/consultations/CONDOC_BB_Impact_Assessment_.pdf)

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