RTPI response to Building Communities APPG on 'How placemaking can lead to greater productivity'.

July 2019

We welcome the chance to submit evidence to the All Party Parliamentary Group for Building Communities call for evidence on how placemaking can lead to greater productivity.

About the RTPI

The RTPI champions the power of planning in creating prosperous places and vibrant communities. As learned society, we use our expertise and research to bring evidence and thought leadership to shape planning policies and thinking. As a professional body, we have over 25,000 members across all sectors, and are responsible for setting formal standards for planning practice and education.

Do you consider that well designed places that take note of placemaking principles are more productive places?

1.   Yes we strongly agree and have published a wide range of research to evidence this. A full list of our research on the Economy and Growth is available here, and we summarise a selection of it below.

2.   Our 2018 report, Settlement Patterns, Urban Form and Sustainability, describes how strategic planning can shape settlement patterns and urban form to increase economic productivity (see Chapter 3).[1] It finds that:

> *'large compact settlement patterns help to reduce the distances between homes and jobs and makes more efficient use of existing transport infrastructure. They enable high-capacity public transport, walking and cycling networks which reduce the overall cost of infrastructure and services, improves accessibility, and reduces congestion. These in turn generate wider economic social and environmental benefits.'*

3.   Creating Economically Successful Places (2014) explored the factors that contribute to economically successful places. It finds in particular that the ingredients of economic success cannot be quantified in conventional economic terms, but instead include "connectivity, opportunity and pleasant environments, underpinned by bold but flexible visions for the future".

4.   In 2015, RTPI research, 'Planning as 'market maker': How planning is used to stimulate development in Germany, France and The Netherlands' was published ; it explores how

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[1] RTPI (2018), Settlement Patterns, Urban Form and Sustainability.

proactive planning can improve the quantity and quality of development in the built environment[2]. Using case studies of Dutch, German and French towns and cities, the research explored what planning in the UK could learn from overseas experience, where 'planning is charged with engaging with the market and providing responses to market failures with which a more passive, regulatory model of planning would be ill-equipped to deal'. The research report concludes:

> *'What we see from the case studies is that planning interventions that are supportive of economic growth go hand in hand with those that make great places. Good quality public spaces, efficient transport networks and attractive urban design should not be understood as coming at the expense of prosperity but rather as congruent with the economic growth that a development process animated by planning can deliver.'*

5.   In particular, and in the Hamburg HafenCity case study, the RTPI research concludes how a proactive planning system can achieve the objectives of the broadest definition of quality design:

> *'Often in the UK infrastructure provision and land assembly are reactive responses to private sector proposals for development. This prevents an overall vision being developed for an area that can achieve wider benefits, such as meeting density and volume requirements for house-building, ensuring environmental sustainability of transport and delivering quality in design. The HafenCity model shows how well-resourced, empowered planning institutions can use the full range of planning tools to deliver place outcomes that enable better long-term economic, environmental and social outcomes.'*

How can we better demonstrate and advance the idea that place matters to people and economies?

6.   Our research programme on the Value of Planning has aimed to demonstrate the importance of planning and spatial-responses to the key issues we face. It found a wide range of benefits of planning and placemaking (see Figure 1).[3]

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[2]   RPTI (2015) Planning as 'market maker': How planning is used to stimulate development in Germany, France and The Netherlands. https://www.rtpi.org.uk/media/1562925/rtpi_research_report_11_planning_as_market_maker_november_2015.pdf

[3] RTPI (2014, 2016, 2016), The Value of Planning.

Figure 1: The benefits of better planning. From D. Adams et al. (2016), Delivering the Value of Planning

The benefits of better planning

PROJECT BENEFITS: PROCESSES	PROJECT BENEFITS: OUTCOMES
Signalling of expectations to developers	Confidence to invest in property	Capturing value uplifts	Control of harmful uses

PROJECT BENEFITS: PROCESSES

Signalling of expectations to developers · Confidence to invest in property

Democratic and community engagement

Tackling ownership constraints · Tackling physical constraints

PROJECT BENEFITS: OUTCOMES

Capturing value uplifts · Control of harmful uses

Co-ordination between developments · Connection with strategies

SPATIAL BENEFITS: PROCESSES

Integration of land use and infrastructure · Provision of public goods

Democratic and community engagement

SPATIAL BENEFITS: OUTCOMES

Efficient organisation of economy · Stable environment for investment

Better quality places

Equitable organisation of economy · New markets in regeneration areas

How does the design of our urban environment maximise the desire of people to interact with each other?

7.   RTPI is a partner in the UK Collaborative Centre for Housing Evidence (CaCHE), a consortium of Universities and Professional Bodies. In 2018, CaCHE published a review of Design Value at a Neighbourhood Scale. This included a review of the different design characteristics which are seen as improving connectivity in places.[4]

> '*National policies tend to agree that a well-designed neighbourhood typically has a permeable and legible street network, integrates mixed use and mixed tenure development, encourages community, offers access to high quality open space, and promotes walking and other modes of active travel, while also achieving a level of architectural distinctiveness and thus a robust sense of place.*'

Is there a role for greater use of strategic planning to promote productivity?

8.   Yes there is. The UK faces a number of pressing challenges, which include tackling the housing crisis, boosting productivity, reducing inequality and shifting to a low-carbon economy. These cannot be tackled as isolated issues. Strategic planning seeks a coordinated response

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[4] B. Serin et al. (2018), Design Value at the Neighbourhood Scale, CaCHE.

across wide geographical areas like city-regions, and across sectors like housing, transport, health and the environment.

9.   Opportunities are developing for authorities to work together at the scale of city-regions, creating joined-up plans which cover a range of issues. To be successful, they will need to understand complex economic, social and environmental trends, build consensus between a wide range of stakeholders, and develop long-term plans in conditions of uncertainty. New tools and approaches are needed to support this wave of strategic planning.

10.   The smart city concept describes the use of data and technology to improve the performance of infrastructure networks and create more liveable urban areas. However, the benefits could go much further. Technological innovation can support local authorities as they work collaboratively to develop integrated plans which cover a wide range of people, places and issues. With leadership from the planning profession, we can create 'Smart City-Regions'.

11.   [Our position paper on Smart City Regions][5] sets out our thoughts on:

   a.   The complex challenges facing city-regions

   b.   How the devolution agenda can drive a new wave of strategic planning

   c.   The role of data and technology in supporting this process

12.   In 2018, the RTPI published a spatial framework for people and places in the North of England[6]. This calls for a more ambitious approach to strategic planning and governance in the region, promoting co-operation beyond traditional boundaries, helping cities, towns and rural areas develop sustainably, and ensuring that prosperity generated by the Northern Powerhouse is shared as widely as possible. It describes the various barriers which currently prevent planning from playing this role, including the absence of a strategic vision for the North, unfinished devolution arrangements, fragmented governance structures, and an excessive focus on the delivery of housing numbers coupled with a lack of planning and funding for the infrastructure needed to create successful places. The spatial framework shows how strategic planning can be used to help the North of England to capitalise upon opportunities to increase its contribution to the national economy by planning positively for the housing and employment growth that can be supported by transformational infrastructure investment, committing to sustainable patterns of growth, and placing the needs of existing and new communities at the heart of planning for the future.

How can local planning policy support community ownership of development?

13.   We have recently supported research on community-led housing which has in turn generated planning practice advice.[7] There are recommendations for how both practice and policy can support community-led development.

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[5] RTPI (2017), [Smart City Regions], RTPI.
[6] RTPI (2018), [Ambitions for the North: A Spatial Framework for People and Places]
[7] J. Lavis (2019), [A planners guide to community-led housing]