



**RTPI**

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# Fostering Growth:

## Understanding and Strengthening the Economic Benefits of Planning

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Policy Paper  
[www.rtpi.org.uk](http://www.rtpi.org.uk)

# About the RTPI's policy and research work

In its Centenary Year the Royal Town Planning Institute (RTPI) representing 23,000 members worldwide working in the public, private, charitable and educational sectors is the largest professional institute for planners in Europe. The RTPI shapes policy, works to raise professional standards and supports members through education, training and development.

Given the current challenges the United Kingdom and Ireland face, the Institute has made investigating the link between planning and economic growth a priority. There has been a lot said on this topic, but after speaking with a wide-range of stakeholders it has become clear there is a need to elevate the discussion beyond existing perceptions.

Sometimes both planners and non-planners fail to appreciate and demonstrate the amount of positive impact planners' expertise can contribute to successful outcomes. Correcting this predicament requires active engagement of stakeholders and the public to recognise how planning has a positive impact by realising a place's potential set within an understanding of its economic, social and environmental assets.

When setting out this piece of work we asked stakeholders from a range of backgrounds what is working effectively and what can be improved upon. Within the report we explore the economic benefits of planning, and identify areas where certain techniques have worked well elsewhere and may be able to be implemented more widely.



We publish this report alongside a parallel research report, *The Value of Planning*, by Professors David Adams and Craig Watkins delving into the economics of planning in addition to sharing an initial framework demonstrating its economic impact. These two pieces of work are the RTPI's latest contribution to this on-going conversation. Later this year we will publish the final Planning Horizons report, *Creating Economically Successful Places*, which will expand upon these themes within a long-term global context.

For further information about our work, please see:  
[www.rtpi.org.uk/knowledge](http://www.rtpi.org.uk/knowledge)



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**Fostering Growth:**  
Understanding and Strengthening the Economic Benefits of Planning

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# Executive summary

Achieving sustainable development is the stated aim of governments in England, Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland and Ireland, meaning it is necessary to properly understand the economic benefits of planning, and the role of planners in fostering growth. The spatial relationship of how components of the built and natural environment work together is fundamentally important to achieve efficiencies, costs savings and added value. Too often major projects are not joined up, but when they are, society benefits.

Planners actively balance the needs and desires of multiple stakeholders and link different policies spatially to achieve maximum benefit. The planning profession fosters growth by adding certainty and creating communities in which people and enterprise want to be based.

Some peoples' perception that planning is too restrictive and too costly is in contrast to the record-high rate of planning approvals. However, the fact local authorities and applicants draw very different conclusions from shared experiences during the application process indicate the need for further improvements such as better working relationships and communication.

## Importance of planning in securing growth

Key ingredients for successful places including transportation and infrastructure, housing, education, skills and innovation, and place combined with the certainty all developers seek, make a strong planning system essential to achieving long-term growth. Effective planning should take account of the full-range of economic factors, primary factors (population growth, climate change and quality of life) and the three dimensions of sustainability. This complexity is sometimes difficult to justify if there is heavy focus on short-term growth, but is crucial to achieve long-term growth.

Business is attracted to people with the right skill sets and people are attracted to well-connected communities with a strong sense of place. These desirable places for business and people rarely happen by chance. Instead these places require a balancing of different needs and desires, and achieving outcomes greater than the sum of its individual parts, which have become two hallmarks of the planning profession.

## Taking advantage of existing tools to foster growth

Approaches making the most of available resources can be applied more widely to help attain long-term growth. For instance, planners bring a unique cross disciplinary perspective of thinking spatially and strategically to bring together different elements of an area. An area's competitive advantage can be enhanced through agglomeration economics as businesses set up in relation to existing resources, supply chains, skilled labour and even their competitors.

An important function of planning is recognising and understanding current economic factors and growth trends so that strategic decisions surrounding development add value to the local area. By understanding the needs of a community, planners can assist with achieving successful outcomes by working closely with the private sector, leaders and neighbouring authorities.



*Bristol Temple Quay*

## Recommendations

In order to identify improvements for planning systems there must be acknowledgement of what works well and what is in need of improvement. The RTPI outlines 10 recommendations it believes should be taken to help achieve creating economically successful places in the UK and Ireland.

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### Re-emphasise strategic approach to planning and the economy

- 1 Enable planning and growth at functional economic level** – Local authorities and regions should be encouraged to plan within functional economic areas (FEAs) to fully realise growth potential and make the most of limited resources.
- 2 Map policies on central map and develop sustainable growth strategies** – Spatial implications of government policies and programmes should be placed on a central map to promote synergies and minimise conflicts.
- 3 Encourage champions to lead vision for growth** – local authorities should be encouraged to identify a ‘Sustainable Growth Champion’ to ensure sustainable growth policies taking into account the three dimensions of sustainability are encouraged across teams and implemented in practice.

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### Strengthen relationships between developers, planners, politicians and community

- 4 Demonstrate commitment and benefits to community** – Applicants should be encouraged to explicitly demonstrate how a proposed development meets the three dimensions of sustainability and to identify trade-offs in preferred options and alternatives.
- 5 Promote better cooperation between public and private sectors** – More should be done to encourage a sense of duty for public and private sectors to cooperate more closely, where the local authority would be asked to demonstrate how they actively work with private entities to realise approved local plans.

- 6 Involve community and planners early** – Applicants should involve the community and local authority planners early in the process to avoid surprises and delays down the line in addition to provide confidence to investors and increase the speed and efficiency of decision making.

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### Acknowledge importance of ‘place’ and support for those responsible

- 7 Investigate possible benefits of devolution to local authorities** – Further investigation is needed to determine the benefits of devolving more power to local authorities such as the ability to retain local business rates and invest in local growth priorities such as housing, transportation infrastructure or skills.
- 8 Achieve better outcomes with additional financial support** – Planning fees to local authorities should be directed to planning services to bolster resources and strengthen the overall team and be supplemented by other resources reflecting the added value planning provides.
- 9 Enhance economic literacy amongst professionals** – There must be a better understanding of the inter-relationship between planning and the economy going beyond an understanding of viability amongst all those responsible for creating successful places including professionals and locally elected members.

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### Implement ‘customer friendly’ approaches

- 10 Align consenting process and reduce unnecessary paperwork** – Local authorities should be incentivised to combine separate consenting processes involving a variety of departments such as transport, building control, environmental services and planning. Both local authorities and applicants should reduce unnecessary paperwork.

# Introduction – different perceptions of planning and growth

When considering the issue of growth, immediate questions that emerge are what exactly growth means, over what time frame and at what scale. The purpose of this paper is to respond to the current dialogue occurring within and outside governments as the UK and Ireland continue to respond to issues such as unemployment, trade, innovation, and the role of planning in securing growth.

Long-term growth requires the consideration of multiple factors. There is broad agreement in the principle of sustainable growth where social, environmental and economic impacts are balanced to meet the needs of current and future generations. The RTPI believes sustainable growth is asset based with a long-term view going beyond single reliance on measurements such as Gross Domestic Product (GDP) or Gross Value Added (GVA). Well-being and untraded goods such as the value of town centres, public spaces, social cohesion and air quality are essential components. For instance, rural tourism which involves the conservation of rural and natural landscapes accounts for 12% of rural employment and is worth more than £29 billion annually.<sup>1</sup> Sustainable growth also requires distinguishing between additional growth and displacing or diverting development. Achieving sustainable development is the stated aim of governments in England, Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland and Ireland, and this is the Institute's contribution to the on-going discussion of how to get there.

A number of factors affects growth not the least of which is access to private and public financing. After the recession beginning in 2008, available financing all but disappeared resulting in a decrease in the number of projects that were able to move forward. In 2011, only 2.3 million sq. ft. of new office space was completed across Birmingham, Central London, Edinburgh, Glasgow, Leeds and Manchester compared to the average of 6 million sq. ft. per year in the 15 years prior to the crisis.<sup>2</sup> Since the recession developers have to respond to a very different

climate where equity and debt investors are more risk adverse forcing developers to demonstrate why their developments are in a stronger position compared to others. Securing investment requires investors to accept lower returns or accept higher risks, and for developers to outline risks and address how they can be mitigated. Planning is just one of multiple risks to development including: site assembly, construction and demand.

In the following pages we identify where planning policy and practice has worked effectively to create sustainable growth in addition to lessons to apply more widely. Working under the basis of achieving sustainable growth allows for an elevated discussion where we are able to unpack the costs and benefits to make recommendations to improve upon the relationship between planning and growth.

## Critics say planning is too restrictive and too costly

There has been steady criticism of the role of planning in fostering economic growth ranging from suggestions to completely dismantle the planning system or to remove involvement from local politicians. Planning is a part of most development, therefore there are likely to be some examples of planning mistakenly standing in the way of growth. For instance, there is the view the experience of seeking planning permission can vary from one local authority to another, and sometimes vary depending upon the officer assigned to the case within the same local authority. Many argue planning should both be flexible and offer consistency despite the obvious tension between these two aims.

Some argue the possibility of a refused planning application adds uncertainty despite the vast majority of applications being approved. This argument overlooks the fact that planning deters developments detrimental to existing developments such as an out-of-town shopping centre competing with an area high street. Some developers argue the costs of planning include interest payments being made while planners deliberate, and lost business opportunities. Commentators claim planning drives up the costs of land and property, adding costs to development.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (November 2011) Rural Economy Growth Review. Available at: [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/183289/rural-economic-growth-review.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/183289/rural-economic-growth-review.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> Rothery, A. (September 2013) Development funding in a cold climate. 41st Joint Planning Law Conference Oxford. Available at: <http://www.quadrilect.co.uk/Andy%20Rothery%20Final.pdf>

It has been estimated that planning delays cost £3 billion per annum which in the past has been repeated by government officials,<sup>4</sup> but this estimate is based on the transaction costs for major housing projects which may be delayed for a number of reasons outside the scope of planning. It should be acknowledged that there are some costs associated with the time required to receive planning permission, but there are also financial benefits that are equally difficult to determine and sometimes ignored by those critical of planning (see more on this in *The Value of Planning*).

Approval rates in England are at a 13 year high (88% for all applications) and even higher elsewhere with the vast majority being decided within 8-16 weeks. However, a perception of planning standing in the way of growth prevails. There is a disconnect between what people perceive to be low approval rates when in reality they are as high as ever. England, Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland and Ireland have approximately eight weeks to decide minor planning applications, with more complex applications ranging from 12-16 weeks to decide.

Some peoples' conclusions may be based entirely on existing perceptions of planning where they may have had a bad experience with a particular planning officer's lack of a customer-friendly approach or an officer recommendation overturned by locally-elected politicians. A CBI study conducted in 2012 indicates 97 per cent of businesses view planning as a barrier to infrastructure delivery.<sup>9</sup> In a second England planning survey conducted in 2013 by GL Hearn 70 per cent of applicants remained dissatisfied with how long applications take to reach a decision, down slightly from 75% in 2012.<sup>10</sup> Seventy-nine per cent of applicants disagreed with the statement that



Local Planning Authorities (LPAs) process applications speedily whereas 78% of LPAs agreed. Instead 78% of LPAs deemed relationship between themselves and applicants to be 'quite effective' and 6% 'very effective' whilst 30% of applicants deemed the relationship to be 'quite effective' and 1% 'very effective'. It is evident local authorities and applicants have drawn very different conclusions based on their shared experiences, indicating the need for better communication and the potential for further improvements in working relationships.

<sup>3</sup> Cheshire, P., Leunig, T., Nathan, M., Overman, H. (June 2012) Links Between Planning and Economic Performance: Evidence Note for LSE Growth Commission. LSE Growth Commission and Institute for Government. Available at: [http://www.lse.ac.uk/researchAndExpertise/units/growthCommission/documents/pdf/contributions/lseGC\\_SERC\\_planning.pdf](http://www.lse.ac.uk/researchAndExpertise/units/growthCommission/documents/pdf/contributions/lseGC_SERC_planning.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> Ball, M. (January 2010) Housing Supply and Planning Controls: The impact of planning control processing times on Housing Supply in England. National Housing and Planning Advice Unit. Available at: <http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20120919132719/www.communities.gov.uk/documents/507390/pdf/1436960.pdf>

<sup>5</sup> Department for Communities and Local Government. Planning applications in England: October to December 2013. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/planning-applications-statistics>

<sup>6</sup> The Scottish Government. Improvement in local planning decision times. Available at: <http://news.scotland.gov.uk/News/Improvement-in-local-planning-decision-times-b14.aspx>

<sup>7</sup> Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency, Department of the Environment. Northern Ireland Planning Development Management Statistics. Available at: [http://www.planningni.gov.uk/index/tools/about-statistics/annual\\_statistical\\_bulletin\\_2012-13.pdf](http://www.planningni.gov.uk/index/tools/about-statistics/annual_statistical_bulletin_2012-13.pdf)

<sup>8</sup> Environment, Community and Local Government. 2012 Annual Planning Statistics. Available at: <http://www.environ.ie/en/Publications/StatisticsandRegularPublications/PlanningStatistics/>

<sup>9</sup> Thackray, T and Leng, J. (September 2012) Better connected, better business: CBI/KPMG infrastructure survey 2012. CBI. Available at: [http://www.cbi.org.uk/media/1744517/is2012\\_final.pdf](http://www.cbi.org.uk/media/1744517/is2012_final.pdf)

<sup>10</sup> GL Hearn. The Second Annual Planning Survey: The Results (September 2013). Available at: <http://www.glhearn.com/Pages/The-second-annual-planning-survey-results.aspx>

### Planning as creative activity adding value

Many of the most inspiring aspects of planning have gradually been redefined and thus disassociated from the planning profession including economic development, regeneration and the allocation of infrastructure such as transport and schools. Planners have been slow to react to this systematic weakening of what is defined as planning meaning some people now associate planners as those merely dictating what can and cannot be built. The management of what is built and where is an important function led by the community, market and facilitated by planners, but that is not the only task planners are responsible for.

Planners bring together multiple interests such as environmental awareness ensuring the air we breathe and the water we drink is safe, economic growth to ensure there are jobs for those needing one, and social considerations such as providing a good quality of life which may include adequate schools, hospitals and open spaces. These three dimensions of sustainability are difficult to manage given competing interests that naturally exist within democracy.

The spatial relationship of how components of the built and natural environment work together is fundamentally important to achieve efficiencies, costs savings and added value. Too often major projects are not joined up, but when they are, society benefits. The Institute believes the strength of our economy can be directly linked to the strength of our planning system through key drivers for growth including: transportation and infrastructure; housing; education, skills and innovation; and place. Most importantly, planning provides certainty to the market, helping ensure developments take place after taking into account short and long-term impacts so that sustainable growth can be achieved. Planning through spatial thinking provides a system and framework to help facilitate growth correctly balancing the social, environmental and economic impacts of development.

### Opportunities to strengthen relationship between planning and growth

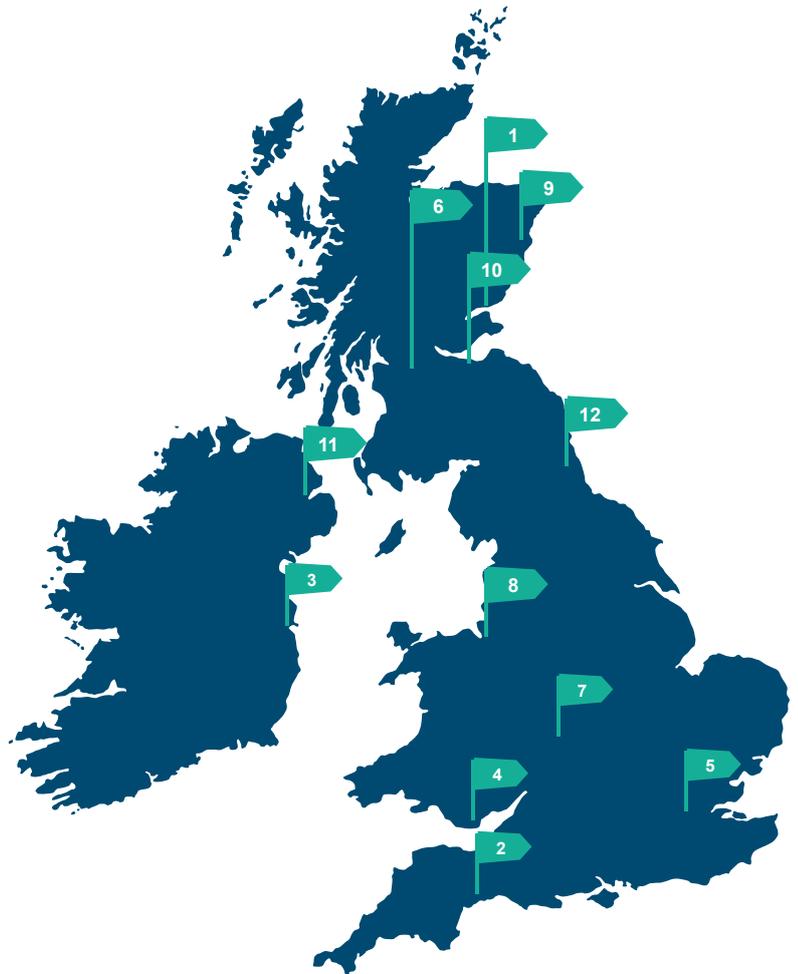
This paper serves as a reminder of how planning is linked to growth policies and where there is need for improvement. Some politicians for the past 20 years have been critical of the planning system by saying it is too slow, overly bureaucratic and standing in the way of economic development. Planners would be amongst the first to say there are always opportunities for improvement, but the positive impact planning can have on growth should be acknowledged and understood as well. In the following pages we explore current growth policies linked to planning, the importance of planning in securing growth and making the most of existing tools to foster growth before making recommendations for policy-makers and practitioners.



*London skyline*

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# Current growth policies linked to planning

Planning outcomes in many ways are driven by the market. Communities may (and should) promote an area for growth through policies and public-sector investment, but in most cases it is the private market which decides whether to build. However, this does not mean planning and growth can be considered in isolation which explains why there has been renewed interest in planning from governments doing everything they can to promote growth following the 2008 economic crisis.

Market failure means that without a broader social, moral and environmental framework sub-optimal outcomes occur. Furthermore, government expenditure on public-sector developments and services such as transportation infrastructure, schools, universities and hospitals can have a positive impact on an area economy encouraging growth and investment. A key role of planning is precisely to balance short-run gains with long-run costs. Another parallel key role of planning is providing longer-term custodianship of crucial environmental capital including renewable and non-renewable natural resources, necessary to sustain a strong functional economy.

## Policy focused on sustainable growth

In England, the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) which sets out its planning policies says planning should “do everything it can to support sustainable economic growth”, and that “significant weight should be placed on the need to support economic growth through the planning system”.<sup>11</sup> The NPPF must be reflected within local plans and is a material consideration in planning decisions. Similar statements to facilitate growth have been shared in Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland and Ireland meaning planners must consider their role in facilitating growth.

## Plan-led system in UK and Ireland

England, Scotland, Wales and Ireland operate using a ‘plan-led’ system meaning national and local planning policy is set out in formal development plans. Development plans share what kind of developments should receive planning permission, how land should be protected and seeks balance between growth demands, the environment and wider public interest. With Northern Ireland as the only exception, decisions planners and council members make each day on individual planning applications are based on the policies found within these local development plans generally referred to in this paper as local plans.

Northern Ireland is in the process of transitioning to a plan-led system involving 11 new councils, contrasting with the current system where the Department of the Environment makes planning decisions centrally based on planning policy statements (PPSs). There is currently work underway to develop a single Strategic Planning Policy Statement drawing together all of the PPSs. The Department of Regional Development is responsible for Regional Strategic Planning and produces the Regional Development Strategy demonstrating a long-term perspective of future development with the purpose of making spatial considerations and offering a planning framework across Northern Ireland. The Department for Social Development amongst other duties has responsibility for regeneration.

The purpose of the Scottish planning system and specific land use policies is set out in the Scottish Planning Policy whereas spatial aspects of government policies are found in the National Planning Framework for Scotland 2; both presently under review. In addition to a national spatial plan and National Planning Framework, Scotland has four city region plans. The Scottish Government has recently consulted on a presumption in favour of development that contributes to sustainable development.

Welsh planning policy set out in Planning Policy Wales stresses the careful consideration of economic, social and

<sup>11</sup> Department for Communities and Local Government (March 2012) National Planning Policy Framework. Available at: [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/6077/2116950.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/6077/2116950.pdf)

environmental factors including requiring local authorities to take a whole economy approach stating, “the planning system should support economic and employment growth alongside social and environmental considerations within the context of sustainable development”.<sup>12</sup> In Ireland the Department for Environment, Community and Local Government develops planning policy. There the National Spatial Strategy provides a national framework recognising regions across Ireland have different roles. The framework attempts to coordinate the different roles based on each region’s strengths.

#### **Different levels of planning**

In Scotland, Strategic Development Planning Authorities (SDPAs) set out visions for long-term development in Strategic Development Plans for its four main city regions of Aberdeen, Dundee, Edinburgh and Glasgow which are updated at least once every five years. The TAYplan covering Dundee, Angus, Perth and North Fife sets out a vision for the next 20 years demonstrating what development and infrastructure should be implemented and how. The four individual authorities also have Local Development Plans demonstrating the detail of proposed development over the next 10 years reflecting the overall TAYplan strategy.

England has abolished Regional Spatial Strategies though Greater London and the London Plan continues to provide strategic context for the area as a whole. In place of regional planning Government has introduced a ‘duty to cooperate’ with neighbouring authorities specifically on issues related to strategic priorities such as housing. Some authorities have combined services focused on transport, economic development and regeneration powers with some powers delegated from central

government such as Greater Manchester, Sheffield City Region and Liverpool City Region following legislation in 2009. Furthermore, 39 Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) have been established across England and have submitted Strategic Economic Plans which may take into account strategic spatial planning issues related to growth.

Presently Wales also does not have statutory regional planning. The Wales Spatial Plan sought to integrate spatial aspects of national strategies; however this has now ceased to be actively used. In 2013, the Swansea Bay and South East Wales City Region Boards were announced in the development and delivery of City Regions in Wales. The draft Planning (Wales) Bill has included two new levels to planning, which include a National Development Framework and regional Strategic Development Plans based on defined parts of Wales.

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<sup>12</sup> Welsh Government (November 2012) Planning Policy Wales Edition 5. Available at: <http://wales.gov.uk/docs/desh/publications/121107ppwedition5en.pdf>

# Importance of planning in securing growth

Businesses are constantly seeking to minimise risks and to maximise certainty. Some critics of planning argue it stands in the way of development, but the planning system provides certainty by making it clear within local plans and other guidance what kind of development can be planned and built. There is scope to make the system even more transparent, but planning already offers an important service of providing certainty of what is possible which many businesses take advantage of whether they realise it or not such as:

- Identifying opportunity areas or areas designated for growth
- Helping to avoid over saturation of a particular use class in an area
- Certainty about what might be built next door



Drivers of Growth	Critical Factors	Planning's Role/Spatial Dimension
 <b>Transportation and Infrastructure</b>	<b>1</b> Strong links to employment, residential and amenities/services in addition to modern connectivity i.e. broadband.	Ensure it meets the needs of people and business, and is joined up. Coordinate with other development. Help to overcome high upfront infrastructure costs, a potentially significant barrier to development.
 <b>Housing</b>	<b>2</b> Adequate availability for range of incomes, quality and close proximity to employment and amenities/services.	Ensure it is located in well connected places with adequate amenities. Align jobs and services with homes.
 <b>Education, Skills and Innovation</b>	<b>3</b> Readily available facilities such as schools, libraries and colleges to provide adequate skills, education and innovation.	Ensure adequate facilities are in place in areas of need or expected to undergo population increases. Link local higher education and business enterprise.
 <b>Place</b>	<b>4</b> Amenities such as cultural attractions, open space, leisure facilities are increasingly important to attract and retain people.	Ensure amenities are correctly sited and adequate to meet the needs of people.

### Key ingredients for successful places

Key drivers of economic growth such as transportation and infrastructure, housing, education, skills and innovation, and place can be strongly linked to planning. Every successful large-scale scheme encompasses these four elements which are essential to economic growth. However, these economic drivers must not be explored in isolation from one another or in fact other drivers.

In addition to these four key ingredients there are also primary drivers planners and policy-makers must respond to such as population growth, climate change and quality of life. Those three factors and others are also critically important in realising a sustainable economy. The ability of places to foster growth depends on what the whole place offers. That is a function (amongst other things) of the capacity of soft and hard infrastructure, and services including health care that make up the social fabric.

Business is attracted to skilled workforces and people are attracted to well-connected communities with a strong

sense of place. These desirable places for business and people rarely happen by chance. Instead these places require a balancing of different needs and desires, and achieving outcomes greater than the sum of its individual parts, which have become two hallmarks of the planning profession.

These drivers combined with the certainty all developers seek, make a strong planning system essential to long-term growth. To successfully achieve sustainable growth governments must value the impact of planning to empower planners in realising an area's potential that is greater than its individual parts.

## 1 Transportation and Infrastructure

For an economy to succeed it must be connected via traditional infrastructure such as streets and bridges, in addition to modern connectivity such as broadband internet. Both of these forms of infrastructure benefit from a spatial strategy facilitated by planners' expertise. There are a number of discussions about how best to facilitate growth by investing in major infrastructure such as High Speed Rail 2 (HS2) from London to Manchester, airport expansion in the South East of England, broadband connectivity in rural areas or an improved transportation link between Ireland and the UK.

The RTPI has made seven recommendations to capture the wider benefits of investment in transport infrastructure by taking into account the full economic impact such as unlocking major centres of employment.<sup>13</sup> Transport does more than move people from point A to B. It influences decisions of people and enterprise including where to live, work and invest. Therefore, infrastructure must take account its surroundings so that the full economic benefits are realised. It has the potential to unlock land for development by making sites viable where there is demand.

To make the most of potential investment the RTPI has recommended the development of a Map for England to plot how policies and programmes interact on a central map open to the public, and the principle holds true for other countries as well.<sup>14</sup> In *Thinking Spatially*, the RTPI expands upon the benefits of an integrated understanding of place and space such as avoiding economic deficiencies such as commuters and goods spending hours in traffic.<sup>15</sup>

## 2 Housing

The most basic of needs for people is adequate shelter. Some take the availability of housing for granted, but for many it is an on-going challenge with continued population increase and a shortage of homes. The UK Government's household projections suggest an estimated 232,000 additional homes are needed each year to 2033 to meet housing need with some estimates considerably higher.<sup>16</sup> Housing targets have not been met and there appears to be a standoff between developers, financiers, environmentalists, existing residents and politicians resulting in planners being somewhere in the middle.

<sup>13</sup> Pendlebury, D. and Blyth, R. (January 2014) Transport Infrastructure Investment: Capturing the Wider Benefits of Investment in Transport Infrastructure. RTPI. Available at: [http://www.rtpi.org.uk/media/816110/capturing\\_the\\_wider\\_benefits.pdf](http://www.rtpi.org.uk/media/816110/capturing_the_wider_benefits.pdf)

<sup>14</sup> Wong, C. (March 2012) A Map for England: Spatial Expression of Government Policies and Programmes. RTPI. Available at: [http://www.sed.manchester.ac.uk/research/cups/map\\_for\\_england\\_final\\_report.pdf](http://www.sed.manchester.ac.uk/research/cups/map_for_england_final_report.pdf)

<sup>15</sup> Harris, M. (June 2014) Thinking Spatially: Why places need to be at the heart of policy-making in the twenty-first century. RTPI. Available at: [http://www.rtpi.org.uk/media/1004403/rtpi\\_thinking\\_spatially.pdf](http://www.rtpi.org.uk/media/1004403/rtpi_thinking_spatially.pdf)

<sup>16</sup> National Audit Office (March 2013) The New Homes Bonus. Available at: [http://www.nao.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2013/03/10122-001-New-Homes-Bonus\\_HC-1047-Exec-Summ.pdf](http://www.nao.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2013/03/10122-001-New-Homes-Bonus_HC-1047-Exec-Summ.pdf)

<sup>17</sup> Discover Dundee Waterfront (2013) Your Waterfront Your Future. Available at: <http://www.dundee waterfront.com/downloads/1683/Dundee-Waterfront-Brochure-2013.pdf>

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## Transportation and Infrastructure

### Dundee Waterfront

Support has steadily grown to reconnect the city to the river which was cut off from the Tay Bridge crossing and associated road network built in the 1960s. The scheme which involves implementing a grid street pattern to match the historic street pattern of the rest of the city centre, creating tree-lined boulevards and minimising the impact of on/off ramps to the Tay Bridge crossing, enjoys a public approval rating of over 90%.<sup>17</sup>

This transformation to unlock valuable land has required demolishing 1970s era buildings including a multi-storey office block, hotel, casino and rail station – which involved recycling demolition materials on site or at other projects. In addition, the enhanced cycle route extends across the entire waterfront and with cycle parking and hiring currently being planned. As part of the scheme there will be a mix of residential, commercial/offices and hotels complemented by active ground floor uses such as cafés, bars and restaurants.

Given the city owns all the land it has meant engagement with potential developers is incredibly important and has led to the creation of the Developer Engagement Group which works to get information to developers and to answer any queries that arise. Faith in the process and the securing of necessary Government funds has created certainty and attracted major investments such as the V&A at Dundee.

The Central Waterfront is the focal point of the wider Waterfront Project which comprises a further four development zones, encompasses 240 hectares of land stretching five miles along the Tay creating an additional 7,000 jobs. It is predicted that the wider waterfront project will have added an additional £1 billion to the cities economy.



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It is fundamental to growth for there to be a diverse range of housing available to people. Planners can help politicians decide how to facilitate this need. The RTPI has published 15 recommendations to unlock sites to meet the UK's housing needs including using planners' abilities to bring together a range of interests and factors.<sup>18</sup> Presently too little planning is taking place when considering the economic benefits of increasing housing levels to adequate levels with a detrimental impact that cannot sustain itself. Growth in investment in housing is worth 40% of forecast national GVA growth to 2016. The current structural shortage of housing has profound impacts on stability, household finances and labour mobility.<sup>19</sup>

There are examples where businesses are concerned employees providing critical services that make a world city like London thrive will soon be unable to live within reasonable commuting distance because of the shortage of affordable housing. A survey indicates 70 per cent of employers believe a lack of affordable housing would affect their ability to attract and retain employees.<sup>20</sup> These concerns are serious which is why affordable housing provisions include some flexibility. A place such as London cannot reach its economic potential if social considerations are ignored meaning it is of great economic importance.

### 3 Education, Skills and Innovation

If one were to ask employers for the number one quality they are looking for in their workforce they are likely to respond with the desire for a strong education or skill set. The OECD states skills are the currency of the 21st century making it critical for education to be accessible to all.<sup>21</sup> It is essential schools, colleges and universities are well-placed to meet the needs of residents and employers. In a globalised world it is also important that other cultural facilities for continued education such as libraries and museums are made available. In more rural areas this can be enabled through broadband connectivity putting information across the world at peoples' fingertips.

Planners are involved in ensuring these types of services are readily available to the local populous alongside other local authority colleagues. Depending on the circumstances, 'planning gain' — through the use of policies such as Section 106 agreements in England and Wales, and Section 75 agreements in Scotland — negotiated by planners can help offset the costs of securing needed educational facilities. In some cases

## Housing

### Cranbrook New Community, Devon

The need for housing and affordable housing has been a major issue in recent years resulting in Cranbrook becoming an integral part of the wider Exeter and East Devon Growth Point aiming to create sustainable new communities, where residents are able to access skilled employment opportunities or training close by. Cranbrook has the potential to deliver 20,000 new homes over the next 20 years and to create in excess of 25,000 new jobs

Cranbrook received outline planning permission for 2,900 homes in 2010 including 40 per cent affordable. Development commenced in the summer of 2011 and now over 600 homes are occupied. St Martin Primary School opened in September 2012, and has become the centre of the new town and a key selling point with the school roll increasing from just over 30 in September 2012 to 186 children in September 2013. The Younghayes Community Centre includes space for a library and GP practice and a parade of neighbourhood shops will follow in phase 2.

Progress has not come easy. The East Devon Local Plan received 15,000 objections in 2006 when it included the proposal for the new town, but ultimately buy-in from within the council was achieved and work with external partners began in earnest. Development can be attributed to collaborative working between the private and public sector partners and the innovative use of revolving infrastructure funds.

As part of the wider development programme improved transport infrastructure including a new rail station, bus routes and cycle paths will enable residents to fully take advantage of nearby amenities.

<sup>18</sup> Sarling, J. and Blyth, R. (September 2013) Delivering Large Scale Housing: Unlocking Schemes and Sites to Help Meet the UK's Housing Needs, RTPI. Available at: <http://rtpi.org.uk/media/630969/RTPI%20large%20scale%20housing%20report.pdf>

<sup>19</sup> Spry, M. (2012) Positive Planning for Growth: What can planning do to stimulate economic growth?, Nathaniel Litchfield and Partners. Available at: [http://www.pas.gov.uk/c/document\\_library/get\\_file?uuid=3f775a2f-e0f5-448e-9927-048fd6c507d0&groupId=332612](http://www.pas.gov.uk/c/document_library/get_file?uuid=3f775a2f-e0f5-448e-9927-048fd6c507d0&groupId=332612)

<sup>20</sup> National Housing Federation. (May 2013) Affordable Housing: Line Managers Survey. Available at: <http://www.housing.org.uk/media/press-releases/housing-crisis-choking-economic-recovery-say-businesses>

<sup>21</sup> OECD (May 2012), Better Skills, Better Jobs, Better Lives: A Strategic Approach to Skills Policies, OECD Publishing. Available at: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264177338-en>

creative solutions are required to meet a community's educational requirements. For instance, Hounslow London Borough Council has looked to incorporate mixed use development as part of education-led schemes to meet school placement needs. Without mixed-use development, funding would be challenging to secure and meet educational needs. Mixed-use development brings the added benefit of schools being at the heart of local communities during and outside of school hours.

In addition to securing adequate facilities it is equally important these facilities are accessible by good transport connections and are generally well placed in relation to one another and where people live. Universities in particular can help attract business and innovation which are increasingly important in today's 'knowledge economy'.<sup>22</sup>

#### 4 Place

Whether it is an inner-city neighbourhood, commuter town or rural country village people want to feel part of a community. As The Farrell Review recently pointed out creating a community identity typically does not happen by accident and requires a number of different elements and professions working together.<sup>23</sup> Planning practice involves bringing all these pieces together to create desirable places to live whether at home, at the workplace or during a night out. Creating these desirable places often helps spark innovation and creativity by attracting the most qualified people and thus more employers often within the same sector – agglomeration.

Endeavour conducted a survey of US business leaders in late 2013 and concluded: "Cities that wish to foster high-growth entrepreneurship should work to improve quality of life factors, increase the supply of talent, and expand access to clients and vendors."<sup>24</sup> Planners regularly balance different needs and desires to effectively facilitate clusters and are responsible in part for creating economically successful places. In 2008, the first report of the Scottish Council of Economic Advisers assigned to advise ministers on Scottish competitiveness suggested planning enable and promote high quality developments and that the ultimate challenge should be to create places people want to be.<sup>25</sup>

<sup>22</sup> Clarke, E. and Williams, M. (April 2014) *Delivering Change: Universities and High Growth Firms*. Centre for Cities. Available at: <http://www.centreforcities.org/research/2014/04/29/delivering-change-universit>

<sup>23</sup> Farrells (March 2014) *The Farrell Review of Architecture and the Built Environment*. Commissioned by Department for Culture Media and Sport. Available at: <http://www.farrellreview.co.uk/download>

<sup>24</sup> Endeavour Insight (2013) *What Do the Best Entrepreneurs Want in a city?: Lessons from the Founders of America's Fastest-Growing Companies*. Available at: <http://www.endeavor.org/blog/endeavor-insight-report-reveals-the-top-qualities-that-entrepreneurs-look-for-in-a-city/>

<sup>25</sup> First Annual Report of the Scottish Council of Economic Advisers (December 2008). Available at: <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Resource/Doc/252027/0073770.pdf>

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### Education, Skills and Innovation

## Grangegorman Development, Dublin

The Dublin Institute of Technology (DIT) is one of the the largest third-level institutions in Ireland and plans to build a new 21st century campus responding to social, cultural and educational needs on the site of an underutilised brownfield site. Currently DIT buildings are scattered throughout the city centre. The Grangegorman project allows DIT to establish a world-class higher education campus on the last available large development site within the city, opening areas for further private investment including mixed-use development. Modern health and community facilities will also be developed. The development is expected to create 1,200 jobs (excluding construction).

Planning has paved the way for the development of the site. The Grangegorman Masterplan 2008 commissioned by Grangegorman Development Agency created the vision for the development of the site envisioning a new city quarter centred around education and health.

The designation of the site as a Strategic Development Zone by Government led to the approval of the Grangegorman Planning Scheme 2012 by the national planning appeals board, An Bord Pleanála, in May 2012. The Planning Scheme is the statutory document governing the planning and development of the site ensuring planning decisions are issued promptly once a development is consistent with the scheme.

The project has been identified by Government as a Flagship Project under its Capital Investment Stimulus Package. Through this and other programmes, over €300 million worth of investment will be developed on the site by September 2017. This will, in turn, generate substantial additional private investment in delivering student housing, science and technology activity and retail uses. Certainty on planning outcomes and timescales has contributed greatly to this decision.

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The focus on attracting people has led to a renewed focus of providing amenities that are important to people such as abundant open space, cultural attractions, good schools in addition to strong transportation links. These and other issues have always been considered by planners and employers. What has perhaps changed is that there is growing recognition that the private and public sector should work more closely with one another to achieve creating successful places where people want to live, work and play.

The value of planning is that it works across sectors and different dimensions. Despite focusing on transportation and infrastructure, housing, education, skills and innovation, and place separately within this paper, all of the case studies above work across the different dimensions of sustainability. Effective planning should take account of the full range of economic factors, primary factors (population growth, climate change and quality of life) and the three dimensions of sustainability. This complexity is sometimes difficult to justify if there is too much focus on short-term growth, but is crucial to achieve long-term growth. For instance, the Irish Government recognised that tackling crime in Limerick would require economic, social and environmental regeneration all working together requiring a multi-disciplinary team and approach. In the Limerick Regeneration Programme master plan there is recognition there is cooperation between the different dimensions, but that they have “distinctly individual and differing requirements and value.”<sup>26</sup>

#### **Economic benefits of creating successful places: agglomeration and investment**

Professor Richard Florida and others have written extensively about the ‘creative class’ and how having a critical mass of creatively driven people can accelerate a city’s growth potential.<sup>27</sup> Luring the ‘creative class’ comes down to creating attractive places to attract and retain people to fill specific roles within the economy thus creating economically successful places. Most often Florida discusses place in relation to the ‘knowledge economy’, but the premise can be expanded to local economies whether it is dominated by manufacturing, finance, services, mining and other sectors.

Ultimately place making can help convince the most qualified people to locate in a particular town or city. People have the ability to move within their country and even across international borders with relative



#### **Place**

### **St David’s Centre 2 in Cardiff**

In 2009 St David’s Centre 2 significantly extended the original shopping centre development completed in 1981 bringing Cardiff within the top six shopping destinations in the UK. The development has included two new arcades, Grand Arcade and Hayes Arcade, to respect the historical Victorian arcades which have become a recognisable feature of Cardiff.

A large part of Cardiff’s underutilised south city centre which included multi-storey car parks and a ‘big-box’ store were demolished to make way for the scheme which has maintained two 24 hour east-west pedestrian streets through the core of the city bringing new life and energy to the city centre.

It is also sympathetic to the historic streetscape with the new Hayes Arcade directly aligned with the Victorian Royal Arcade frontage at the west of The Hayes, whilst the Grand Arcade runs north-south through the centre of the development and links the original St David’s Centre through to the largest John Lewis department store outside of London.

A total of £12 million was committed toward public realm enhancements and public art which has seen the pedestrianisation of the Hayes, the creation of Hayes Place and the enhancement of historic public spaces including Hayes Island and St Johns Gardens.

The successful development results from the creation of the St David’s Partnership including the developer and landowners (including Cardiff Council) with a firm commitment to masterplanning principles and architectural vision prior to the submission of detailed proposals.

Buy-in was achieved through co-ordinated business, community and stakeholder engagement through consultative groups, facilitated by the developer prior to commencement and during construction phases. Regular dialogue with the local authority post development, including transport, planning, economic development, marketing and city management functions continues to take place.

<sup>26</sup> Limerick Regeneration Agencies (2007) Limerick Regeneration Programme. Available at: <http://www.limerickregeneration.ie/documents/masterplan/pageflip.html> 26 Florida, R. (2012) The Rise of the Creative Class—Revisited: Revised and Expanded. Basic Books: Second Edition.

<sup>27</sup> Florida, R. (2012) The Rise of the Creative Class—Revisited: Revised and Expanded. Basic Books: Second Edition.

ease meaning employers have to increasingly give consideration as to where they are based so that they are able to attract and retain the best employees. To be competitive in the ‘knowledge economy’ the UK and Ireland must be able to retain its home-grown talent and if possible attract key people from elsewhere. Those same people want a quality of life which goes beyond their own material consumption – an unpolluted environment, secure social fabric, affordable housing and good public services are high up the list.

Planning can be seen as a mechanism to unlock opportunities by creating certainty centred around the four key ingredients. In the end it requires cooperation from other players whether they be a nearby resident, local politician, small business owner, investor or visitor. Balancing these different needs is nothing new to planning and with the acknowledgement of its role and its importance further sustainable economic growth can be achieved benefiting the whole of society.

Cambridge has become a high-tech business hub linked to its wider research community including the University of Cambridge and other research institutes. There high-tech businesses provide close to a quarter of all jobs.<sup>28</sup> Increased access to transport, housing and skills increase productivity because it allows firms and workers to benefit from agglomeration economics.<sup>29</sup> Agglomeration can be defined as the geographic concentration of people and businesses. Resulting from Cambridge’s success is the growing need for homes and infrastructure. For Cambridge to succeed it will need to continue investing in its infrastructure including housing and transport, and sustain the quality of life to retain and attract a well-qualified workforce. SQW contends Cambridge “must be a place where people choose to live, work and do business, acknowledging that the boundaries between these different spheres are increasingly blurred; indeed this ‘blurring’ – arguably – constitutes a primary source of the area’s competitive advantage.”

### Avoiding costly mistakes caused by lack of planning

By identifying practical areas for growth, the location of airports, ports and mass transit systems doors are opened for private investment and long-term savings are made. The danger of knee-jerk solutions not adequately involving planners and spatial thinking may result in costly mistakes in the future.



## King’s Cross, London

Sixty-seven acres in North London are undergoing a transformation taking into account its manufacturing past, and is taking shape as a major employment, cultural and residential hub. King’s Cross has attracted major employers such as Google given its unrivalled transportation connections, canal-side setting and new open spaces. Not far from Silicon Roundabout, King’s Cross is becoming a powerhouse for emerging creative jobs and will be home to 6,000 people who are expected to move into the area as the development includes close to 2,000 new homes.

The regeneration of King’s Cross involves repurposing 20 historic buildings some of which are within a conservation area. It is the largest mixed-use development in single ownership to be developed in central London for more than 150 years. Planning permission for 8 million sq. ft. of mixed-use development was secured in 2006 and the first phase of development has been completed which includes new open space at Granary Square where barges once unloaded their goods and is the new home of Central Saint Martins College of Art and Design.

The lead developer Argent involved partners such as English Heritage and Camden Borough Council early on in pre-application discussions resulting in Camden granting outline planning permission accompanied by a Heritage Plan setting out shared expectations for individual heritage buildings in 2006. Camden Council was able to grant permission with greater flexibility due to the strong working relationship between the different parties and because the developer provided enough detail for the council to assess likely impacts. Flexibility allows the council and developer to respond to changes in market conditions over the life of the development. The use of Planning Performance Agreements (PPAs) benefited both the developer and council ensuring timely delivery, quality decision making and appropriate monitoring.

<sup>28</sup> SQW (March 2011) Cambridge Cluster at 50 The Cambridge economy: retrospect and prospect.

Available at: [https://www.scams.gov.uk/sites/www.scams.gov.uk/files/documents/Cambridge\\_cluster\\_report\\_FINAL\\_REPORT\\_060411\\_0.pdf](https://www.scams.gov.uk/sites/www.scams.gov.uk/files/documents/Cambridge_cluster_report_FINAL_REPORT_060411_0.pdf)

<sup>29</sup> Manchester Independent Economic Review (April 2009) The Case for Agglomeration Economies.

Available at: <http://www.manchester-review.org.uk/projects/view/?id=718pageflip.html>

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Policies in some parts of the US and China have led to endless sprawl leading to huge economic deficiencies such as commuters spending hours in road traffic, increased pollution, lack of cultural attractions and loss of diversity. Recent Office for National Statistics (ONS) data suggests commuters who spend 60-90 minutes commuting have lower life satisfaction, lower levels of happiness and higher anxiety than non-commuters.<sup>30</sup> Existing congestion is estimated to cost £7-8 billion per annum<sup>31</sup> and according to the 2006 Eddington Transport Study a 5% reduction in travel time for business could save circa £2.5 billion.<sup>32</sup> Inefficient development is economically unsustainable leading to over reliance on cars and out-of-town shopping centres where there are already examples of decay in serious need of regeneration. Regeneration of strip malls and abandoned 'big box' stores pose a serious challenge in places like America as they are expected to be costly.<sup>33</sup>

Research conducted by CEOs for Cities estimates Portland, Oregon saves \$2.6 billion per annum because people drive four fewer miles than the average American per day.<sup>34</sup> Findings suggest this has strengthened Portland's local economy as people have more disposable income to spend at businesses better linked to the local economy such as shops, cafés and restaurants.

Smart growth defined as the more efficient use of land and a mix of homes, business and services within close proximity has been coined in the US, but is more prevalent in Western Europe. Smart Growth America has aggregated data to estimate the cost savings caused from smart growth policies. It found it reduces the upfront costs of infrastructure such as road, sewers and water lines by 38 per cent and 10 per cent on on-going delivery of services.<sup>35</sup>

<sup>30</sup> Office for National Statistics (February 2014). Commuting and Personal Well-Being. Available at: [http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/dcp171766\\_351954.pdf](http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/dcp171766_351954.pdf)

<sup>31</sup> Arup (December 2011) Transport Systems and Integration: Technology and Innovation Centre. Available at: <https://ts.catapult.org.uk/documents/2157668/0/Benefits+of+a+Transport+Systems+Catapult/c9e27f65-667c-43b8-b8fe-e106a4e94f0a;jsessionid=8464A4A57B0C4E5BE0DD677596D8D45C.1?version=1.2>

<sup>32</sup> HM Treasury (December 2006) The Eddington Transport Study. Available at: <http://www.thepep.org/ClearingHouse/docfiles/Eddington.Transport.Study%20-%20Rod.pdf>

<sup>33</sup> Drummer, R. (October 2012) The De-Malling of America: What's Next for Hundreds of Outmoded Malls?. CoStar. Available at: <http://www.costar.com/News/Article/The-De-Malling-of-America-Whats-Next-for-Hundreds-of-Outmoded-Malls-/141980>

<sup>34</sup> Cortright, J. (July 2007) Portland's Green Dividend. CEOs for Cities. Available at: <http://blog.oregonlive.com/commuting/2009/09/pdxgreendividend.pdf>

<sup>35</sup> Smart Growth America (May 2013) Building Better Budgets: A National Examination of the Fiscal Benefits of Smart Growth Development. Available at: <http://www.smartgrowthamerica.org/documents/building-better-budgets.pdf>

<sup>36</sup> Clyde Gateway. A Whole New Approach to Regeneration. Available at: [www.clydegateway.com](http://www.clydegateway.com)

<sup>37</sup> City Legacy Homes. The Village in the New East End. Available at: [www.citylegacy.co.uk/thevillage.aspx](http://www.citylegacy.co.uk/thevillage.aspx)



## Clyde Gateway, Glasgow

Clyde Gateway is an urban regeneration company established in partnership between Glasgow City Council, South Lanarkshire Council and Scottish Enterprise. Through a shared vision all three partners hope to achieve a new approach for the largest regeneration project in Scotland. Up until 2028 it is making investments in key sites that will deliver houses, jobs, as well as taking steps to maximise training and work opportunities for area residents.<sup>36</sup> The development hopes to create 20,000 jobs over two decades in manufacturing, construction, office work, leisure and recreational activities, hotels and tourism, retail and financial services.

The area was once bustling with activity with those working in the mills and other factories living close by with plentiful schools, churches and shops. This began to change in the 1960/70s. As heavy industry went into decline in the late 20th Century poverty and deprivation increased leading to some homes and businesses becoming vacant or derelict. The project makes good use of existing brownfield sites given the past prominence of heavy industries as well as transport connections given its just one mile from Glasgow Cross in the city centre.

One-third of the land at the 840 hectares site requires remediation for contamination or infrastructure improvements, but has led to reusing underused land within close proximity to central Glasgow. In addition to making use of brownfield sites, Athlete's Village is to be used for the 2014 Glasgow Commonwealth Games and will become waterfront homes following the games within a compact community including two pedestrian bridges.<sup>37</sup> The new east end neighbourhood will include more than 1,440 homes consisting of apartments, terraced, semi-detached and detached houses.

This project takes advantage of what is already in place to regenerate an area which was experiencing challenges in the past. By making the most of its existing assets is set to become a sustainable community providing housing and jobs within close proximity to one another.

# Taking advantage of existing tools to foster growth

Despite limited resources, planners and local leaders have been resourceful in developing approaches to make the best use of existing tools in the pursuit of sustainable economic growth. These approaches range from providing leadership and certainty, better cooperation amongst a range of stakeholders and building on an area's competitive advantage. In the following pages a number of methods and accompanying case studies identify potential lessons that may be implemented more broadly.

## Leadership is immensely important to instil confidence

Leadership is a key component to foster sustainable growth. Inattention to visioning exercises due to limited resources or lack of political leadership leads to confusion within the planning system and frustrations with prospective developers. There have been examples where a directly-elected mayor has the ability to galvanise support for a collective vision. The Local Government Act 2000 first enabled local authorities such as London to directly elect mayors with the most recent city to do so being Bristol in 2012. Leadership within a local authority, whether that be a strong council member or directly-elected mayor, is instrumental in implementing changes to assist in securing sustainable development.

In Canada, Vancouver led by Mayor Gregor Robertson demonstrated the value of strong leadership in creating a vision for the city. The mayor and others led the entire community involving business and the public in realising their ambition to become the greenest city, designed to bring prosperity to the city and improve the quality of life for residents.

The Greenest City 2020 Action Plan sets out how Vancouver plans to meet the need of present and future generations with a strong focus on linking economic vibrancy and jobs to sustainability initiatives.<sup>38</sup> In the non-statutory plan they outline steps to create compact neighbourhoods easily accessible to jobs, shops and

leisure facilities including particular focus on investing in walking, cycling and mass transit opposed to simply building new roads. Vancouver has become well known as a destination for green business across traditional and new industry sectors. To further the lure of the city, the action plan sets out establishing a green enterprise zone to focus green businesses, infrastructure, building design and land use planning in one place.

Leadership meant that more than 120 city organisations were united behind a common purpose with more than 9,500 individuals sharing their thoughts and ideas on the plan that has been recognised globally. Much of the work during the development of the plan and after has been led by a wide-ranging group of stakeholders in business, academia and government.

## Promoting strategic spatial visions creates certainty

Government at the national and local level has a role to play in demonstrating to business where they should consider setting up and the benefits of doing so. Scenario planning involving the consideration of alternative strategic futures and economic context is vital. Sometimes evidence and analysis within planning reports can be backward looking through the use of standard forecasting techniques. This process should be abundantly transparent meaning some mechanism beyond statutory plans may be necessary to share a vision for a particular place, making the case as to why it should be considered for private investment.

Certainty is the most important factor investors consider when deciding whether to invest in a particular scheme or area. The more certainty the better and the more the public sector can do to convince investors their community is the right place to invest the better chance the aspirations of that community are realised. Statutory plans often give indications of a place's ambitions, but sometimes they can be inaccessible to the needs of investors. In some cases it may be appropriate for a community to share its vision in an easily understandable, accessible manner making it transparent what direction it is heading.



<sup>38</sup> City of Vancouver (2012) Greenest City 2020 Action Plan. Available at: <http://vancouver.ca/files/cov/Greenest-city-action-plan.pdf>



City of Vancouver

Developers have repeatedly raised the importance of an area having a clear vision of its ambitions to make their investment decisions easier. Local authorities should proactively share the kinds of development that would be easily approved on vacant or brownfield sites. These could be through a criteria based list contained in local plans or via Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs) or Local Development Orders (LDOs). In addition, mechanisms to deliver decisions quickly must be devised. Local plans share aspects of a vision, but perhaps sometimes not at the level of detail or accessibility that would be most helpful to private investors. Formal plans can often take three years or more to develop meaning in some cases there is a need for non-statutory plans to help the public understand an area's vision.

### Building on an area's competitive advantage

An important role for planning is to build upon an area's competitive advantage when it comes to attracting investment and sustainable growth. By focusing on an area's competitive advantage a place can build on its strengths to lure investment. Planners bring a unique cross disciplinary perspective of thinking spatially and strategically to bring together different elements of an area so that the whole is greater than the sum of its parts.

The UK Trade and Investment's Regeneration Investment Organisation (RIO) has been showcasing opportunities of regeneration and transport investments to foreign investors.<sup>42</sup> It aims to identify projects and investment from around the world relying on places' unique attractiveness to investors.

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### Birmingham & Solihull LEP

The Greater Birmingham & Solihull LEP (GBSLEP) has developed a strong reputation for outlining the strategic direction the area is going and how future spatial planning can be part of realising that vision. In 2013, GBSLEP published a Strategy for Growth building upon work undertaken as part of the Greater Birmingham Project: The Path To Local Growth<sup>39</sup> – a local interpretation of proposals from No Stone Unturned in Pursuit of Growth by Lord Michael Heseltine<sup>40</sup>. The strategy sets out key overarching objectives aimed at growing the local economy and putting in place the building blocks for sustained prosperity.

Alongside the Strategy for Growth, the GBSLEP is developing a non-statutory Spatial Plan for Recovery and Growth intended to address strategic matters and assist in aligning local plans.

"The aim has been to produce an authentic and useable spatial plan that is high level and short, dovetailing with the Strategy for Growth and providing the link with the development plans in each local authority area."<sup>41</sup>

The spatial plan is to be updated annually and provide a strategic steer as it looks to the scale, broad distribution and directions of growth. Because LEPs have not been given planning powers, for the resulting plan to work it has been necessary to work collaboratively across sectors, respect local sensitivities and to bolster with relevant evidence. The first draft iteration of the spatial plan has identified 12 key drivers of change ranging from creating a place to do business to quality of life for residents.

<sup>39</sup> Greater Birmingham & Solihull Local Enterprise Partnership (2013) Greater Birmingham Project: The Path To Local Growth. Available at: [http://centreforenterprise.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/03/GBSLEP-Report-version\\_complete.pdf](http://centreforenterprise.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/03/GBSLEP-Report-version_complete.pdf)

<sup>40</sup> The Rt Hon the Lord Heseltine of Thenford CH (October 2012) No Stone Unturned in Pursuit of Growth. Available at: [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/34648/12-1213-no-stone-untuned-in-pursuit-of-growth.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/34648/12-1213-no-stone-untuned-in-pursuit-of-growth.pdf)

<sup>41</sup> Birmingham & Solihull LEP (2013) Spatial Plan for Recovery and Growth. Available at: <http://centreforenterprise.com/sprgcon/>

<sup>42</sup> UK Trade and Investment (2014) Regeneration Investment Organisation. Available at: <https://www.ukti-regeneration.co.uk/Login/Login?ReturnUrl=%2f>



As LEPs in England use their Strategic Economic Plans to compete for limited financial resources from the Local Growth Fund, the proposals taking account of their strategies spatially make them stronger, more competitive bids. Minister of State for Cities Greg Clark MP urged LEPs to follow American singer-songwriter Dolly Parton's advice when developing their plans for the first time: "Find out who you are and do it on purpose." To successfully understand and take advantage of a place's competitive advantage spatial analysis and consideration is needed. Research commissioned by the RTPI is currently investigating whether LEPs are adequately equipped to become part of a strategic mechanism to plan for growth.<sup>43</sup>

An area's competitive advantage can be enhanced by agglomeration economics as businesses set up in relation to existing resources, supply chains, skilled labour and even their competitors. Businesses benefit from pulling from a strong supply of skilled workers, easier access to suppliers and knowledge spillovers where ideas are more freely developed.<sup>44</sup>



## Atlantic Gateway

Atlantic Gateway, involving Liverpool and Manchester City Regions and the surrounding areas of Cheshire and Warrington, is the largest UK growth area outside of London with estimates suggesting 250,000 new jobs and 400,000 new homes are possible by 2030.<sup>45</sup> Atlantic Gateway linking Manchester and Liverpool is separate from adjacent clusters such as Leeds/Sheffield and Birmingham/West Midlands. Connections between Manchester and Liverpool are strong and improving, but Atlantic Gateway has also identified how those connections can be improved upon. The functional economic area (FEA) consists of two large and several smaller rural clusters offering a unique opportunity and is the largest site of urban agglomeration outside of London and the South East of England.

The Atlantic Gateway currently benefits from multi-modal connectivity of road, air, water and rail infrastructure crucial to attracting investment and in enhancing the logistics and distribution opportunities. Improving the connectivity of the Atlantic Gateway area makes the North West more competitive, builds on the existing manufacturing sector and facilitates the export of both goods and services, generating spill-over economic activity that will lead to the development of new business activities.

The vision is to maximise investment into the North West. Driven by the private sector with the support of the public sector including three area LEPs the Gateway aims to unite the area's knowledge and business base by focusing on innovation in four key sectors: transport and logistics networks; science; information technology and digital media; connectivity and infrastructure; and low carbon/sustainable energy sources. The Atlantic Gateway is actively exploring what these sectors need in order to thrive and has demonstrated the benefit of applying larger than local thinking made possible through close cooperation between the private and public sectors identifying particular area assets to build on. That level of strategic planning is sometimes necessary to make the most of opportunities across multiple artificial boundaries.

<sup>43</sup> RTPI (2014) Planning for Growth: The Role of Local Enterprise Partnerships in England Interim report. Available at: [http://rtpi.org.uk/media/877318/rtpi\\_research\\_report\\_planning\\_for\\_growth\\_-\\_the\\_role\\_of\\_leps\\_-\\_northumbria-durham\\_3\\_march\\_2014.pdf](http://rtpi.org.uk/media/877318/rtpi_research_report_planning_for_growth_-_the_role_of_leps_-_northumbria-durham_3_march_2014.pdf)

<sup>44</sup> IPPR Centre for Cities (April 2007) The Route to Growth: transport, density and productivity. Available at: [http://www.centreforcities.org/assets/files/pdfs/route\\_to\\_growth.pdf](http://www.centreforcities.org/assets/files/pdfs/route_to_growth.pdf)

<sup>45</sup> Atlantic Gateway (2012) Atlantic Gateway Business Plan. Available at: [http://www.atlanticgateway.co.uk/\\_assets/downloads/ag-businessplan.pdf](http://www.atlanticgateway.co.uk/_assets/downloads/ag-businessplan.pdf)

### Strengthening relationships and trust – working together

A strong relationship between councillors and local authority planners is important so that there is trust between them and both feel comfortable approaching one another when an issue arises. Developing relationships comes down to mutual respect for one another which can be gained by:

- offering clear advice
- being consistent with advice
- being honest when an answer to a question is not known

In the London Borough of Croydon successful relationships and trust have meant councillors typically go to the director of planning with concerns before a planning committee meeting. If a particular issue arises during the meeting the director of planning or officers on their behalf has the ability to pause consideration of an application to offer 'advice on grounds'. The power is rarely used because the close working relationship means problems are addressed in advance of meetings.

Relationships between officers and applicants are also important. Planning may not independently create growth, but it plays an important role by working with private sector leaders to determine where growth opportunities exist. The private sector usually decides whether to build or expand, but there is little reason why the private and public sectors cannot work more closely with one another to discover growth opportunities through collaborative planning. There are commercial sensitivities, but those can be overcome through the use of intermediaries between local authorities and developers such as Forward Swindon. Forward Swindon, an arms-length entity owned by Swindon Borough Council, serves as a bridge between the local authority and business so that each side is able to better understand one another's needs and vision.

Relationships are equally important in rural areas such as Mendip District Council where the Economic Development Strategy completed in November 2012 established a clear framework for economic growth establishing the need for a positive business culture. Through strong civic leadership, pro-active development planning and innovative approach to funding, the council was encouraged to forge a much deeper relationship with local businesses. Actions included appointment of a full-time 'Principal Growth Enabler' in the planning team as a key contact point for major commercial development proposals working in conjunction with the Senior Economic Development Officer and acting as lead officer in determining these proposals. The translation of a generic corporate goal into a clear strategy and management delivery plan has enabled the council to focus operational priorities towards more specific business outcomes which recognise the importance of future economic growth to support on-going service delivery as well as local prosperity.

Rhondda Cynon Taf Borough Council received an application from GE Aircraft Engine Services for a 32,290 sq. ft. workshop and storage building at their facility in Nantgarw. The company were keen to secure a quick decision as they were vacating a facility that they had been using elsewhere and needed to program the necessary works to ensure a smooth transition from that site to Nantgarw. The company required the additional floorspace due to their success in securing orders for servicing a far greater number of aero engines than has previously been the case. The council worked closely with GE Aircraft to ensure that the matter was fully considered and a planning permission issued well within the statutory period.



## Trinity Group Aberdeen

The Trinity Group is a partnership forum between public and private sector leaders to help facilitate the delivery of development in Aberdeen. The group started after there was recognition that property development in the area required working together to bridge the public/private divide and an improved dialogue was needed to deliver high-quality sustainable development during challenging economic circumstances. The aim of the group “is to bring together a wide range of interests involved in development to increase understanding and sharing of best practice between the public and private sectors, identify delivery mechanisms and provide a unified voice to central and devolved government on development matters.”

Trinity Group has established a trusting working relationship and mutual understanding resulting in the development of the following:

- viability training by banks and surveyors to elected members
- options for provision of essential infrastructure to support development
- local performance indicators reflecting the role of all parties in the development process

It consciously does not focus on particular developments. Improved relationships or ‘Trinity thinking’, as they term it, has helped facilitate discussions and negotiations on development. Workshops and discussions on process issues such as Roads Constructions Consents have been improved dramatically.

The group includes a wide-range of stakeholders such as: the Leader of Aberdeen City Council, the Head of Planning and Sustainable Development, the Convenor and Vice-Convenor of the Council’s Enterprise, Planning and Infrastructure Committee and managers responsible for development planning, development management, transportation and planning gain, with senior representatives from Aberdeen City and Shire Economic Future, Aberdeen and Grampian Chamber of Commerce, Lloyds and RBS, planning lawyers, planning consultants, engineers, surveyors, and housing and commercial developers.

## Implementing ‘customer friendly’ approaches

A failure of planning would be developing a plan and stopping there. Local authorities should ensure the planning department is designed to effectively respond to investors and business owners in a friendly and helpful manner.

Some authorities such as Swindon have successfully assigned account managers to help large businesses in the area navigate local requirements including planning and building control. Similar approaches should be implemented elsewhere for small and large employers. Small businesses in particular may not have the time or understanding to easily navigate the planning system, but can be hugely beneficial to a local economy. Part of a planner’s job is to provide good advice and to provide a positive customer experience to those with enquiries so that they are able to realise their ambitions.

Culture within some planning departments should change to move away from simply determining whether planning applications meet requirements. Instead, more time should be spent on determining whether the applications’ aims and objectives fit the vision set out in local plans and could be made to work given some flexibility. The default answer when determining planning applications as it already is in many cases should be ‘yes’ opposed to ‘no’. This level of service requires planners have the tools, training and resources they need to take a more pragmatic approach to deciding applications.

Customer-friendly approaches are becoming more prevalent. Not long ago in 2008 Rugby Borough Council was considered a ‘standards authority’ in the eyes of the then Government before becoming a high performing and highly rated service by customers. Rugby has now benefited from an increase in business and particularly repeat business in terms of expansion and relocation. In South Cambridgeshire, a greater focus on economic growth applications was achieved through flagging relevant planning applications to avoid bottlenecks and establishing a special panel including economic development officers to look at them. Key account principles are applied with the grade of staff proportional to the scale of project and attention paid to effective staff succession planning. In addition there is a focus on looking ahead to see what major economic growth related applications are likely to be coming along in the future and to prepare accordingly.



*i54 South Staffordshire site*

A number of LEPs in England such as Black Country LEP, Dorset LEP, Coventry & Warwickshire LEP have established planning protocols to try and simplify the planning process. Protocols are intended to improve the process of deciding planning applications so that there is a common understanding amongst stakeholders. For instance, Black Country has the same planning strategy across four different boroughs whereas Dorset vows to adopt a common sense, proactive and customer-friendly approach and to work with customers at the earliest opportunity.<sup>46</sup> The charter states planners will work with developers to come to agreement over the strategic acceptability of a development first before moving on to the detail second.

In Scotland, planning process agreements are used for major applications as a project management tool identifying information required and setting timescales for delivery. The agreements are intended to be brief with realistic timings. There has also been a drive to develop a more holistic approach to measure planning authority performance through the Planning Performance Framework by the Heads of Planning Scotland.<sup>47</sup> The framework provides a mix of qualitative and quantitative measures going beyond time taken to decide applications.

Wolverhampton City applied the Vanguard Method to transform the planning application process. Before the review development management was seen as blocking development and causing delays. During the review they challenged common assumptions which led them to discover the number of unnecessary checks taking place leaving little incentive for planners to get it right the first time. By implementing a more customer focused system the morale

<sup>46</sup> Dorset Local Enterprise Partnership (March 2013) Working Better Together: Dorset LEP Planning Charter. Available at: <http://www.dorsetlep.co.uk/assets/About-Us/Planning-Charter/Dorset-LEP-Planning-Charter-Board-Approved.pdf>

<sup>47</sup> Heads of Planning Scotland (March 2012) The Planning Performance Framework. Available at: [www.scotland.gov.uk/resource/0039/00390612.pdf](http://www.scotland.gov.uk/resource/0039/00390612.pdf)

<sup>48</sup> City of Edinburgh Concordat (2013) The Edinburgh Planning Concordat. Available at: [http://www.edinburgh.gov.uk/downloads/file/2434/edinburgh\\_planning\\_concordat](http://www.edinburgh.gov.uk/downloads/file/2434/edinburgh_planning_concordat)

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## Edinburgh Concordat

Edinburgh has published the Edinburgh Concordat 2013 setting out a statement of commitments agreed between the development sector and planning authority including shared objectives and joint actions.<sup>48</sup>

As part of the agreement the City of Edinburgh Council facilitates engagement with developers and enables community councils to seek community input. Whereas the development industry ensures resources needed during the planning process are in place with particular emphasis on pre-application consultation with all sections of the community. A 'One Door Approach' for developers has been implemented at the council in recognition personnel on planning teams require a range of technical and other skills in addition to an understanding of development economics.

A number of processes have been agreed to between the three partners including the planning authority doing the following (and more) during the pre-application consultation stage:

- Where appropriate, convene early meetings with key agencies / consultees to scope information requirements.
- Provide guidance on pre-application consultation and encourage the developer to engage early with the local community council.
- Provide the community council with resources for wider engagement.
- Identify whether the proposals require presentation to the Development Management Subcommittee in a pre-application report to allow members to participate in scoping the draft determining issues.
- Help the community council understand the proposals including guidance on material objections.
- Ensure a lead case officer coordinates a pre-submission 'application package' meeting with the project team to agree the final package of documents, forms, notifications and supporting drawings and documents to ensure validation.

of planners has improved, in addition to the satisfaction of applicants, creating thousands of jobs and new homes in the process. Also, Wolverhampton City Council and South Staffordshire District Council (as cross boundary local planning authorities) granted outline planning consent for the i54 South Staffordshire site, which is part of the Black Country Enterprise Zone. This has enabled the building of new manufacturing plants for major companies including Moog, Eurofins and Jaguar Land Rover.

### **Making sense of economic factors and nurturing growth trends**

An important function of planning is recognising and understanding current economic factors and growth trends so that strategic decisions surrounding development add value to the local area. By understanding the needs of a community, planners can assist with achieving successful outcomes by working closely with the private sector and leaders.

Multiple places have been trying to replicate the economic success of Silicon Valley in California including Old Street, London where government and private resources have invested in Silicon Roundabout — an area attracting high-tech business start-ups. Small start-ups began locating near Old Street because of low rent in addition to the buzz of surrounding night life, central location, unique ‘vibe’ and links to other upstarts.

Planners cannot take full credit of Silicon Roundabout’s success, but planning plays a broader role in relation to facilitating the success of its surrounding area and responding to growth trends. For instance, the London Borough of Hackney has successfully received an exemption from relaxation of changes of use from office to residential. Given the increasing value of residential properties in London there is huge pressure to convert office space to residential that would result in short-term profits for developers, but undermine the area’s tech economy. Leaders and planners have correctly identified the success of Tech City and have been implementing policies to help nurture its success including the availability of office space.



## **Victoria Square, Belfast**

In 1999, the economic and physical environment of Belfast City Centre was facing real challenges including the loss of confidence in the city centre. Four different private retail schemes were being considered in Belfast City Centre which would have flooded the market. The schemes were assessed through a developer selection competition emphasising design quality, permeability and mixed-use principles. This process was able to demonstrate why the Northern Ireland Government should implement land assembly powers which enabled one scheme, Victoria Square, to move ahead.

The Department for Social Development (DSD) adopted a retail-led regeneration policy taking care to extend consumer choice whilst ensuring retail space expanded kept pace with the retail market.

Opened in March 2008, Victoria Square has created a new urban quarter, connecting the city centre with Laganside adjacent to the river and adjusting the centre of gravity of the city. Victoria Square addressed the significant under-provision of retail space in Belfast, introducing a new shopping experience to the province. It has successfully fuelled a longer daytime economy which now stretches into the night.

Victoria Square includes facilities expected of a modern mixed use retail-led scheme in addition to a dome with views of the city which has become one of Belfast’s top attractions. The ambitious model of the open mall has revived the urban quarter where the huge level of footfall has led to commercial success for the wider city centre which benefits from linked visits and improved accessibility. The city centre’s attractiveness to investors in terms of retail, tourism, hospitality and city living is expected to grow.

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### Cross-boundary cooperation

In Scotland, the National Planning Framework sets out a long-term national development strategy and SDPAs develop visions for Scotland's four largest city regions consisting of neighbouring local authorities. Each local authority applies their local development plans offering further specifics to the SDPA 20-year vision. This relationship requires strong cooperation between the local authorities and city regions as the plans are regularly updated to ensure positive outcomes.

Planning across artificial boundaries whether they be local authority or county lines can be hugely complex. In England, there is a duty for neighbouring authorities to cooperate with one another regarding strategic issues such as housing and some local authorities have begun combining some local authority responsibilities. Centre for Cities has recently recommended the expanded use of combined authorities by incentivising separate authorities to establish functional economic areas (FEAs) reflecting geographic areas where people live and work.<sup>49</sup>

There are examples of local authorities saving resources by working closely with one another on wider planning issues. For instance, the Black Country Core Strategy developed by Dudley, Sandwell, Walsall and Wolverhampton sets out a local plan and vision for the sub region up to 2026 taking account of spatial and economic implications for surrounding areas such as Birmingham.<sup>50</sup> The four local authorities determined they have a shared set of social, economic and environmental challenges to respond to and drafted a combined local plan which was adopted in February 2011.

<sup>49</sup> Wilcox, Z., Nohrovà, N., Williams, M. (March 2014) *Breaking Boundaries: empowering city growth through cross-border collaboration*. Centre for Cities. Available at: <http://www.centreforcities.org/assets/files/2014/14-03-27-City-Money-Breaking-Boundaries.pdf>

<sup>50</sup> Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council, Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council, Walsall Council, Wolverhampton City Council (February 2011) *Black Country Core Strategy*. Available at: <http://www.wolverhampton.gov.uk/CHttpHandler.ashx?id=1491&p=0>

<sup>51</sup> Gateshead Council and Newcastle City Council (February 2014) *Planning for the Future*. Available at: <http://www.gateshead.gov.uk/Building%20and%20Development/PlanningpolicyandLDF/LocalPlan/GatesheadandNewcastleJointDocuments.aspx>

<sup>52</sup> Newcastle City Council and North East LEP (July 2012) *Newcastle City Deal*. Available at: [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/221015/Newcastle-City-Deal-Paper.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/221015/Newcastle-City-Deal-Paper.pdf)



### Newcastle Gateshead ADZ

Given the spatial relationship between Newcastle and Gateshead there has been a history of strong cooperation between the two neighbouring authorities. Early in 2014 the two authorities submitted a joint core strategy and urban core plan currently under examination, and in July 2012 a City Deal with Government agreed joint approaches to deliver shared priorities, which they are working closely together to deliver.<sup>51</sup>

The Newcastle City Deal included a Newcastle Gateshead Accelerated Development Zone (ADZ) with Tax Increment Financing powers, designed to unlock growth by stimulating investment on key sites for development.<sup>52</sup> This supports the councils to achieve their shared economic ambitions for the area. Delivery is overseen by the Gateshead and Newcastle Partnership, which provides strategic direction, transparency and accountability.

The ADZ covers four key sites identified for significant growth over the next 25 years:

- Science Central, offering opportunities for businesses to co-locate with Newcastle University.
- Stephenson Quarter and Central Station area, primed to become a major new office district
- East Pilgrim Street, set to become a substantial mixed-use development
- Gateshead Quays and Baltic Business Quarter, a significant new mixed-use development,

Tax Increment Financing powers enable all of the growth in business rate income on the ADZ sites to be retained locally, rather than held by the Treasury, to support the delivery of vital economic infrastructure. The councils have been coordinating a multitude of disciplines and partners so that the bigger picture of economic and housing growth can be achieved at the same time as ensuring quality placemaking. This helps continue to change perceptions by making the area a more desirable and competitive place to live, work and visit.

# Recommendations for achieving even more successful outcomes

It is a helpful exercise for all those involved in the built environment profession to take a step back to identify what is working and what is not. Having set out the importance of planning in securing growth in addition to outlining how existing tools available today can be used to foster growth we turn attention to recommendations for policy-makers and practitioners. In the following pages the RTPI outlines 10 recommendations to achieve creating economically successful places in the UK and Ireland.

## Re-emphasise strategic approach to planning and the economy

### 1 Enable planning and growth at functional economic level

Functional economic areas (FEAs) is 'the spatial level at which the relevant economic market operates' and is the most appropriate level to conduct economic analysis and in some cases spatial planning analysis to enact sustainable growth policies.<sup>53</sup>

It is understood economic activities transcend artificial local authority boundaries and consequently it is difficult to determine the costs and benefits of the impact of a particular policy if it spreads across administrative boundaries.

In England, LEPs have been established that operate above the local level and below the regional level meaning they have the potential of effectively representing FEAs. Though current LEP boundaries may not accurately reflect FEAs, there is scope to change the boundaries. In Scotland, the four Strategic Development Planning Authorities (SDPAs) representing the country's four city regions develop plans adhering to Scotland's National Planning Framework (NPF) which may serve as a model to

be applied more widely including parts of Scotland that fall outside of an identified city region.

Local authorities and regions elsewhere should be encouraged to plan within FEAs to fully realise growth potential and make the most of limited resources. Understanding the FEA provides strong spatial evidence indicating which local authorities should be working on economic challenges and opportunities including employment, housing and transport at the regional scale. Further cooperation could be instilled by offering incentives for local authorities to share services when appropriate. Effective use of FEAs helps to maximise resources and achieve integrated place-based economic strategies. The RTPI plans to make further recommendations regarding the way in which local authorities can more effectively function in its upcoming policy paper focused on strategic planning.

### 2 Map policies on central map and develop sustainable growth strategies

National and regional policies should be spatially represented on a central map easily accessible to the public to further the understanding of policy by policy-makers, the public and enterprise. A greater understanding of how policies interact increases certainty welcomed by investors.

There is great value in bringing together different maps in one place so that patterns of spatial synergies and conflicts arising from government policies can be identified. Despite the generally recognised and accepted need to ensure a joined up approach to planning infrastructure and services, there is remarkably still no single place or data source that makes all of these maps available to view.

It is important to acknowledge spatial implications of policies, and then to take measures to promote synergies and minimise conflicts arising from government policies. By showing implications on a central map it becomes more evident which policies should be set at the national or regional level and is important when presenting a clear vision to attract investment. Growth has been made a

<sup>53</sup> Department for Communities and Local Government (2010) Functional Economic Market Areas. Available at: <http://www.researchonline.org.uk/sds/search/download.do;jsessionid=3210AE2D7AFB4D5F095B25B5979522C0?ref=B15156>

priority across the UK and Ireland, but more work can be done to ensure an integrated approach across all government departments to meet overall objectives. Governments should clearly set out their sustainable growth ambitions and how it sees the roles of different departments in meeting those aims. Involving separate teams, expertise and support leads to achieving better outcomes and value.

### 3 Encourage champions to lead vision for growth

Areas successfully implementing growth have been led by leaders who offer a convincing vision based on local plans, understand the importance of getting the balance of sustainability right and are prepared to lead others in implementing strategies.

To instil leadership, local authorities should be encouraged to identify a 'Sustainable Growth Champion' which could be the Chief Executive, Chief Planning Officer, Elected Mayor or other high-ranking official to ensure sustainable growth policies taking into account the three dimensions of sustainability are being encouraged across local authority teams and being implemented on the ground in practice.

The champion should be encouraged to enlist help from area leaders, the community and planners as they are particularly well positioned to think across sectors to ensure the best potential long-term outcomes based on an area's vision. Similarly Chartered Town Planners should be members of senior management teams at all levels of government. Governments at all levels should brief champions on policies and resources in place to encourage sustainable growth and help facilitate champions sharing lessons learnt with one another.

Single Outcome Agreements (SOAs), like those used in Scotland, intended to achieve better outcomes through the delivery of high quality public services could assist in guiding champions. SOAs are binding plans agreed to with the Scottish Government including agreed outcomes, indicators and targets.

## Strengthen relationships between developers, planners, politicians and community

### 4 Demonstrate commitment and benefits to community

Applicants should be encouraged to explicitly demonstrate how a proposed development meets the three dimensions of sustainability and to identify trade-offs in preferred options and alternatives

Developers can assist local leaders understand options by clearly articulating the benefits of development including demonstrating financial benefits such as the New Homes Bonus and rates in England of proposed developments in addition to other economic benefits for the local authority to consider such as number of jobs created and displaced. Sustainable development sets out to simultaneously achieve the maximum amount of social, environmental and economic benefits. The more clearly applicants can set out how their proposals correspond to these three factors the more likely planners and local officials are able to make optimal decisions.

Final officer reports with recommendations to members should always explicitly present the arguments for and against the proposal in economic, social and environmental terms, illustrating where trade-offs between these may be required. In some cases it may be equally helpful to set out the impacts of not developing a property such as where an employment site is underutilised leading to higher unemployment or vacant shop fronts putting off potential shoppers along high streets and leading to anti-social behaviour such as crime. By clearly outlining the impact, positive or negative, local leaders are better positioned to make the best decisions.

Developers wishing to sell land with planning permission or an underway development should be encouraged to publish long-term sustainability plans. If developers are walking away from a development site they should make it abundantly clear how the project is sustainable

in the long-term, otherwise they have little interest in its long-term success. Similarly developers should transparently share their intentions for a property with or without permission to facilitate an informal dialogue with the community so that when it comes time for planning applications to come forward there is little surprise. In addition to avoiding unnecessary delays arising from disputes it would lead to better overall outcomes.

## 5 Promote better cooperation between public and private sectors

More should be done to encourage a sense of duty for public and private sectors to cooperate more closely, where the local authority would be asked to demonstrate how they actively work with private entities to realise approved local plans.

Such an approach could help ensure an adequate supply of marketable and competitively located employment and housing sites.

The use of tools such as planning protocols between the public sector, business and community could be encouraged to help demonstrate the level of cooperation. A number of LEPs in England have established planning protocols to try and simplify the planning process with the intention to improve the process of deciding planning applications so that there is a common understanding amongst stakeholders. Similarly the Edinburgh Concordat sets out a statement of commitments agreed between the development sector and planning authority including shared objectives and joint actions. These types of approaches should be strengthened, then encouraged and replicated elsewhere.

## 6 Involve community and planners early

Applicants should involve the community and local authority planners early in the process to avoid delays down the line. This approach avoids unnecessary surprises.

Sometimes there are times in which applicants are surprised further along in the process after engaging a local authority team falling outside of planning who sometimes fail to involve colleagues across different teams. Planners are trained to think across sectors so by involving planners early the local authorities can provide

confidence to investors, come to agreement over outputs and requirements, increase the speed and efficiency of decision making, and improve design quality without compromising viability.

By encouraging the use of Processing Agreements in Scotland and in some cases Planning Performance Agreements (PPAs) in England and similar tools elsewhere a range of stakeholders are incentivised to become involved early and subsequently improves the quality of applications and the decision-making process through collaboration. Processing Agreements and PPAs set out the key processes involved in determining a planning application and set timescales for delivery, which can be beneficial to all parties. However, such tools should not be unnecessarily used as a method of raising revenue and should instead focus primarily on improving delivery.

The pre-application process can be a valuable tool for applicants, the public and local authority to engage early on in the process. Ten commitments for effective pre-application engagement have been published by the Local Government Association and the RTPI to alleviate frustrations with the system and result in better outcomes.<sup>54</sup> On all major applications and where community interest requires it, pre-application meetings should be held in public to inform the widest possible range of people about the vision, facts and process.

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## Acknowledge importance of 'place' and support for those responsible

### 7 Investigate possible benefits of devolution to local authorities

Where power has been devolved to local authorities there is evidence suggesting they are better equipped to effectively respond to local challenges and opportunities.

Central government has an important role of developing national policy and pulling together the spatial impact of policies at a wider scale than local authorities can do on their own. However, local communities are best suited to achieve local growth with powers devolved to them such as the ability to retain local business rates and invest

<sup>54</sup> Local Government Association and RTPI (2013) 10 commitments for effective pre-application engagement. Available at: <http://www.rtpi.org.uk/media/844002/10%20commitments%20for%20effective%20pre-application%20engagement.pdf>

in local priorities. There has been a concordat signed between the Scottish Government and the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities (COSLA) which de-ring fenced grants and give local authorities more autonomy on decision making and resource allocation within the framework of their Single Outcome Agreement.<sup>55</sup>

Too often central governments slow down the process and simply do not have the knowledge of locally elected representatives, officers, business leaders and residents. These people on the ground have an intimate understanding of what is needed in their local communities. In regards to planning, each community has different challenges whether they be a shortage of housing, inadequate transportation infrastructure, lack of skills or perhaps the impacts of climate change such as severe flooding. Local authorities already have the ability to produce local plans, but in many cases they do not have the available resources to realise their visions. That is why there should be serious consideration of proposals shifting resources to the local level which could incentivise neighbouring areas to work collaboratively. As Lord Michael Heseltine has said the only way of getting people to work together in partnership is to dangle a carrot.

## 8 Achieve better outcomes with additional financial support

Positive planning provides added value to the wider economy and because planning adds value it is critical it is provided adequate resources to foster sustainable growth. Planning fees should not be used to fund other initiatives, and instead should be invested back into the planning department to improve outcomes.

The realities of planning mean that it is not possible for planning teams to be financially self-sufficient, but there is evidence applicants are willing to pay higher planning fees for planning applications including pre-application consultations for a more robust and efficient service. Higher fees cannot guarantee approval, but it can provide added certainty and comfort to those preparing applications.

Planning fees to local authorities should be directed to planning services to bolster resources and strengthen the overall team and be supplemented by other resources reflecting the added value planning provides. Additional resources are needed to ensure local planning authorities

are able to employ the best possible teams with the necessary skills and experience to achieve successful outcomes. Creative opportunities to identify additional areas of financial support should be considered such as allocating a small percentage of unspent Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) funds in England and Wales to planning teams and its functions. CIL provides only a small percentage of the investment funds needed for infrastructure projects, but does little good if it is not being spent. In localities where CIL funds are not being spent, these critical funds to spur growth can be put to better use if the capacities of planning departments are strengthened allowing strategic infrastructure projects to progress further than they would without the added personnel and resource capacity.

In some cases public-sector cost constraints have led to the loss of the most creative and capable staff at local authorities resulting in poorer outcomes. Lack of resources may lead to suboptimal planning decisions based on simply ticking boxes or lack of forward planning and vision. In many cases planners have successfully overcome these constraints; however, more can and should be done to empower the potential of planning and the planning profession.

## 9 Enhance economic literacy amongst professionals

It is critical that current and future planners, other built environment professionals, policy-makers and politicians have a strong understanding of the inter relationship between planning, growth and the economy as a whole.

This process commences within RTPI-accredited university programmes, and should also apply to Continued Professional Development courses organised by the RTPI, Planning Advisory Service, Improvement Service, Heads of Planning Scotland and others.

RTPI accreditation for university programmes requires accredited institutions to consider six broad matters of principle including economic issues related to development. It specifically places emphasis on integrating different aspects of planning knowledge,

<sup>55</sup> The Scottish Government and COSLA (November 2007) Available at: <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Resource/Doc/923/0054147.pdf>

skills and value awareness mentioning typical graduates from spatial planning programmes should be able to, “Evaluate different development strategies and the practical application of development finance; assess the implications for generating added value for the community.”<sup>56</sup>

There must be a better understanding of the interrelationship between planning and the economy going beyond an understanding of viability amongst all those responsible for creating successful places including professionals and locally elected members. It is vitally important all parties have a robust understanding of the importance of innovation and economic trends. Otherwise important factors and how they interrelate spatially will not be properly considered.

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## Implement ‘customer friendly’ approaches

### 10 Align consenting process and reduce unnecessary paperwork

Local authorities should be incentivised to combine separate consenting processes involving a variety of departments such as transport, building control, environmental services and planning.

To many first-time applicants it is unfathomable that several different consenting processes and procedures operate under the same roof, but sometimes operate with little communication and coordination across different teams. The consenting process across several local authority departments can be a burden to applicants, especially individuals and small businesses.

The Planning and Development (Strategic Infrastructure) Act 2006 in Ireland provided for the establishment of a streamlined consenting procedure for certain types of major infrastructure and the creation of a specialised division within An Bord Pleanála, the planning appeals body in Ireland, to make decisions in relation to such projects. Similarly the Scottish Government has developed a framework to align information for planning permission and Roads Construction Consent that it will test during 2014-15 alongside local authorities and developers.<sup>57</sup> These kinds of approaches should be replicated elsewhere across the UK.

Often the amount of paper involved in the planning application process can be overwhelming to all those involved. Major applications will continue to be hefty when necessary given the complexities involved. However, applicants should be encouraged to submit only necessary information to avoid overly burdening local authorities. At times some developers have shared information that is not relevant to material consideration, which only slows down the process of making decisions. Similarly planners and other public-sector professionals should only request further information from applicants when it is to be directly used in making a planning recommendation or decision.

Some private-sector applicants feel some materials are requested to ‘tick a box’ or without consideration of the amount of resources needed to pull together the information only for the information not to be seriously considered during the decision-making process. Initiatives to reduce the amount of paperwork should continue to be explored to reduce the burden on both the public and private sectors and to reach better outcomes more quickly.

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<sup>56</sup> RTPI (2012) Policy Statement on Initial Planning Education. Available at: [http://www.rtpi.org.uk/media/8479/microsoft\\_word\\_-\\_policy\\_statement\\_on\\_initial\\_planning\\_education\\_2012.pdf](http://www.rtpi.org.uk/media/8479/microsoft_word_-_policy_statement_on_initial_planning_education_2012.pdf)

<sup>57</sup> The Scottish Government (2013) Creating Places: Aligning Consents. Available at: <http://creatingplacescotland.org/designing-streets/process/aligning-consents>

## Conclusion

Planning is vital within a complex and sophisticated democracy in order to protect wider societal interests. Planners are there to balance the needs and desires of multiple stakeholders and to link different policies spatially to achieve maximum benefit. Few would seriously suggest a laissez-faire attitude that sprung up during the industrial revolution would have succeeded economically in the long-run without intervention taking into account factors such as over-crowded slums and the resulting health risks.



*Dundee Waterfront*

Planning can be an easy scapegoat because it is complex and involves many different players including the national and local policies in place, planning officers, private-sector planning consultants and developers, statutory consultees, neighbours of the proposed development, politicians and ultimately an appeals process. If someone does not like a particular decision it is easy to point the finger at 'planning' no matter whether the decision was based on national or local policy, the recommendation of a planning officer, local councillor or appeals system.

There are a large number of checks and balances built into the system to ensure development occurs at the right place and time. However, that does not mean there cannot be improvements to the way in which planning works whether that means communicating more effectively with the public, a more cooperative style when working with those considering a development, avoiding working within silos, and building on relationships between planners and local leaders.

Planning fosters growth by adding certainty and creating communities people and businesses want to locate in, benefiting from agglomeration economics. Planning also improves peoples' quality of life and preserves the natural environment, but these determinations are not mutually exclusive.

At times the planning profession has failed to effectively make the case of the economic benefits of planning. To make improvements to current planning systems there must be acknowledgement of what works well and what is in need of improvement. The RTPI encourages its members and others to join them in implementing its recommendations to strengthen the economic benefits of planning in pursuit of sustainable economic growth.

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## Roundtable participants:

### Belfast

Richard Blyth (RTPI), Seamus Cleary (SER Solutions), Helen Harrison (JUNO Planning & Environmental Ltd), David Mounstephen (Fleming Mounstephen Planning), Gavan Rafferty (University of Ulster), Carol Ramsey (Department for Social Development, Northern Ireland Executive), Beverley Stephenson (Strategic Planning), David Worthington (Pragma Planning & Development Consultants Limited), Roisin Willmott (RTPI)

### Cardiff

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### Bury St Edmonds

Richard Blyth (RTPI), Adrian Cannard (Greater Cambridge Greater Peterborough Enterprise Partnership), James Cutting (Suffolk County Council), Chris Green (SQW), Paul Maison (RTPI East of England), Andrea Mayley (West Suffolk Council), Jo Mills (South Cambridgeshire District Council), Robert Purton (David Lock Associates), Philip Ridley (Suffolk Coastal & Waveney District Councils), Richard Summers (Spatial St Edmonds), Cllr Richard Thake (Hertfordshire County Council), Graham Thomas (Cambridgeshire County Council)

### Leeds

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### Taunton

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### London

Richard Blyth (RTPI), Emily Carder (Department of Business, Innovation & Skills), Edward Clarke (Centre for Cities), Alastair Crowdy (GL Hearn), Claire Davies (Savills), Sarah Elliott (AECOM), Mike Kiely (London Borough of Croydon), Richard Laming (Turley Associates), Tim Martin (Retired), Simon Neate (Indigo Planning), Lawrence Revill (David Lock Associates), Jonathan Schifferes (Royal Society for the encouragement of Arts, Manufactures and Commerce), Dominic Williams (Hewdon Consulting)

## Edinburgh

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## Dublin

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## Melton Mowbray

Adrian Coy (URS), Matt Gregory (Nottingham City Council), Andy Gutherson (Lincolnshire County Council), Victoria Lazenby (Highways Agency), Rob Murfin (Derbyshire County Council), Andrew Pritchard (East Midlands Council), Will Rossiter (Nottingham Business School), Andrew Smith (Leicester City Council)

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