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# Strategic Planning:

## Effective Cooperation for Planning Across Boundaries

January 2015



Policy Paper

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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. As well as promoting spatial planning, the RTPI develops and shapes policy affecting the built and natural environment, works to raise professional standards and supports members through continuous education, training and development. Everything we do is inspired by our mission to advance the science and art of planning for the benefit of the public.



Our policy and research work reflects this mission. In addition to this policy paper on strategic planning, we have already published papers on large scale housing, transport infrastructure and fostering economic growth. This year also has seen publication of our Planning Horizons series of extended essays on global issues concerning cities, people and the environment in the next 100 years.

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**Trudi Elliott CBE**  
Chief Executive, RTPI

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**Strategic Planning:**  
Effective cooperation for planning across boundaries

This report was written by Richard Blyth MRTPI, with support from Craig McLaren MRTPI, Nikola Miller MRTPI and Roisin Willmott MRTPI

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# Executive summary

Managing housing markets, transport networks, river basins, energy supplies, and investment in skills needs co-ordination across a wider area than a single local government area. The solution is strategic planning.

Around the world, and in the UK and Ireland, the critical challenge of marrying local concerns and wider issues across city-regions and other areas is being faced in a number of ways. Spatial planning is a discipline and profession which is critical to this process. On the one hand how we respond to this challenge has a strong influence on how effective spatial planning is. On the other, spatial planning provides sound insights into finding solutions.

Through workshops with stakeholders around the UK and Ireland, and through background research, the Royal Town Planning Institute (RTPI) has looked at how planning has worked to cross council boundaries in a number of settings, such as, for example an area centred around the core area of a city but including its surroundings.

We found that cooperation between local authorities brings major benefits to all of the councils in a given area: we looked at evidence from Northern France and Greater Manchester (England) and found that establishing informal channels of cooperation across wider civil society was a key factor in success.

Following the principle of subsidiarity, it is clear that arrangements for strategic planning benefit from being locally-designed. However, many national governments have not always followed this advice. We looked at examples from three parts of England where contrasting forms of successful local design of cooperative arrangements can be found.

Many attempts at successful strategic planning have floundered due to insufficiently wide scope. Our report shows that strategic planning needs to cover a wide range of areas of public policy. This is illustrated by reference to Glasgow & Clyde Valley and Greater London where more than simple land-use regulation is brought into the strategic planning process.

One reason why effective strategic planning can be unduly limited is in failing to achieve deep political involvement. Evidence in this report from the Tay region strategic planning area in Scotland and South East Queensland shows examples of how strategic planning works well if it has strong local political buy-in. This can be a big challenge to professionals, as it faces head on the local/wider question at the heart of the need for strategic planning.

Whilst all local stakeholders and the public are important in plan preparation, engagement of business can not only be elusive but also critical. If businesses seek to exercise influence only after the plan has been drafted, this can be prejudicial to effective implementation. Looking at South East Wales, Lancashire and the Black Country we show how close links with business are vital.

It is not however, always possible to find a common geography for each of these activities. Some issues require planning over larger areas than that of the main strategic planning function. So cooperation needs to reach beyond the boundaries of the core strategic planning area. This can be achieved by having mechanisms for further cooperation between area groupings.

## General principles

Through the work for this report and the experience of our members we have devised various general principles which strategic planning should follow irrespective of where it is practised. Strategic planning should:

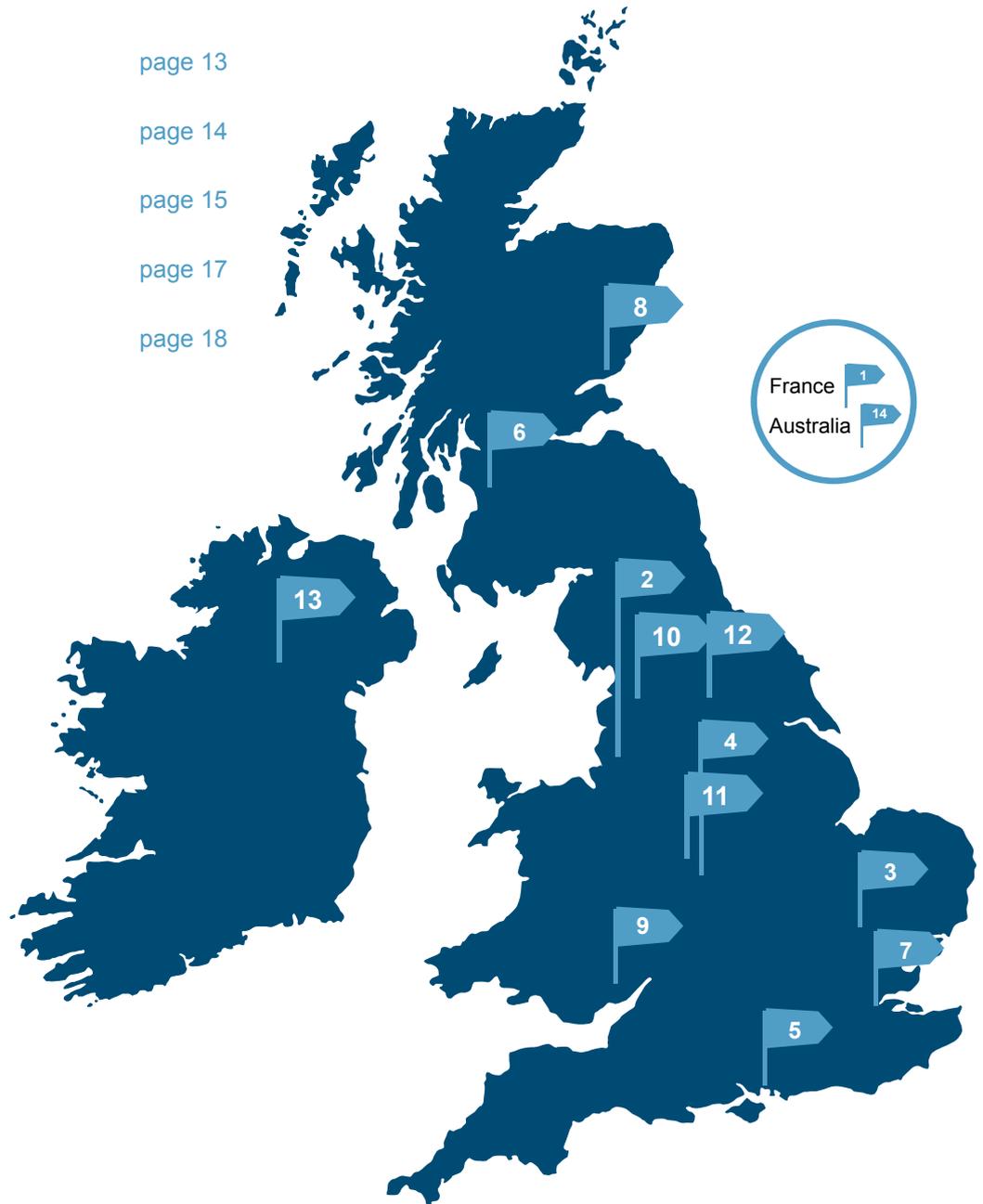
- Have focus - being efficient in the use of resources and clear about its purpose;
- Be genuinely strategic – dealing only with matters which require resolution across boundaries;
- Be spatial – i.e. it should make choices between places, not simply establish general criteria for later decision making;
- Be collaborative - meaning that partners work together to see how they can deliver each other's agendas;
- Have strong leadership – so that negotiations between places are productive and not protracted;
- Be accountable to local electorates.

The RTPI operates in all five nations of the UK and Ireland. The challenge of achieving cross boundary cooperation exists in all five nations to different degrees and despite different legal and political situations. We make recommendations for each nation:

- For England the focus should be on the need for proper incentives to achieve strategic planning where the duty to cooperate has not been effective, and to build on the momentum to harness the potential of the city regions;
- In Scotland the emphasis needs to build on the well established framework of strategic plans by embedding investment programmes for their areas and better connected to Single Outcome Agreements;
- In Wales strategic plans being brought forward through the first Planning Bill. A focus is needed on integrated and inclusive plans which are robust yet flexible and reflect real communities of interest;
- In Northern Ireland action must be centred round the Review of Public Administration and how this works within the Regional Development Strategy;
- In Ireland the new Regional Spatial and Economic Strategies will need to influence and contribute to other government strategies and the plans of state development agencies.

# Case studies found within the report

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# Introduction

A long-standing concern for planners in the UK, Ireland and further afield has been how you look at the bigger picture and identify and manage the needs of wider areas – be they city-regions, counties or larger areas such as water catchments.

This is because people and goods cross local boundaries very regularly, and few of our towns and cities are self-contained entities. More recently this issue has become more critical with an increasing challenge to cities of all sizes to compete globally. No longer can an area take refuge under the wings of a benevolent state. The more successful ones will be those which can organize themselves and their partners in their surroundings in the most successful ways. In most of the world this has to be achieved through cooperation between councils (municipalities) as most urban governments work at fairly local scale.

This issue is also of specific current importance to the nations of the UK and Ireland as a consequence of recent political and administrative changes which (to varying degrees) have thrown the issue of strategic planning into sharp focus. This includes the abolition of regional strategies in England, the creation of new local authorities in Northern Ireland, the review of strategic planning in Scotland and the consideration of the first Planning Bill in Wales. In Ireland the way planning will work under new regional and local government arrangements is currently a matter for discussion.

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 fundamentals of strategic planning, and identify areas where certain techniques have worked well elsewhere and may be able to be implemented more widely. We end by making recommendations to the governments of the UK and Ireland.

# Foundations for strategic planning

## Why it is important to link cities and their surroundings

The future well-being of communities and the creation of more and better jobs in a competitive economy is being put at risk by the failure to integrate fully the provision of housing and necessary infrastructure and services across local authority boundaries.

There is increasing recognition that a nation's prosperity is dependent on its cities' success. In many countries cities produce more output per worker than average and more output within growing economic sectors. They can also more be environmentally sustainable, with for example UK cities producing 32% less carbon emissions than non-city areas.<sup>1</sup>

And it is not just cities in isolation – the way in which cities are connected to each other within nations and internationally is of critical importance. But in addition the functioning of cities depends on relationships with areas immediately surrounding them. Geographers call these 'functional economic areas'. They are also known as 'city regions'. Relationships within these areas include obvious ones such as commuting, but also business-to-business relationships, and connections between major institutions such as universities and hospitals and the areas in which they are located.

However in many countries around the world, including Britain and Ireland, the political facts of such relationships do not reflect the economic and social realities on the ground. Such is the increasing significance of cities – and particular the growing understanding that cities **compete** with each other around the world, that such political difficulties are becoming matters of national priority. The OECD has identified five phenomena<sup>2</sup> that must be tackled to achieve the optimal performance of cities – and, it should be recalled, this city performance is a key determinant of national economic performance (and also of national social and environmental performance).

These are:

- Finance and fiscal policies
- Joined-up governance
- Governance for functional geographies
- Institutional structure and frameworks

These are issues which are of core concern to the RTPI. The issue of spatial policies is concerned with the problem that people-oriented agendas such as education, skills, housing, health and social services have been driven by national institutions concerned to ensure uniform provision but consequently poorly adapted to local urban contexts. This is the focus of a report<sup>3</sup> in our Centenary *Planning Horizons* series.

Another *Planning Horizons*<sup>4</sup> report has covered matters of finance, governance and institutions for cities. A critical question is the need for different layers of government (national, city and neighbourhood) to be properly empowered for their respective tasks and to *work together effectively*. It is equally important for the different sectors with responsibility for policies in urban areas to work together within those places. As far as citizens are concerned, what matters is their entire experience, not the administrative convenience of different silos. This issue is a particular challenge where individual sectors have pursued policies of large scale privatisation.

The question of suitable subnational government is of importance across Europe with the European Commission requiring the involvement of different tiers of government in its funding programmes.<sup>5</sup>

This paper is concerned with how city-regions face up to the challenges of adapting their governance to functional geographies. Throughout the high-income countries of the world this question is a major priority. Clark and Clark point out that the direct solution of simply redrawing boundaries to reflect functional geography is rarely adopted as it is unpopular, expensive and difficult to get right. On the other hand the imposition of a two tier metropolitan system is often resisted by existing lower tiers. The most common solution around the world is one form or other of innovation whereby local governments enter into partnerships.<sup>6</sup> Whilst arising from a wider discussion within public policy, this is an issue of profound importance for urban planning in particular, and at this juncture in most of the UK and Ireland.

Many matters such as managing river basins, planning renewable energy, providing sufficient and affordable housing across a commuting area, ensuring transport links are sufficient, responding to climate change and guiding strategic investment in health, education and training need coordination across a wider area than a single local authority.

<sup>1</sup> Centre for Cities *Cities Outlook 2014*

<sup>2</sup> Rt Hon Greg Clark and Greg Clark, *Nations and the Wealth of Cities*, Centre for London 2014 p21

<sup>3</sup> *Thinking Spatially*, RTPI June 2014

<sup>4</sup> *Making Better Decisions for Places*, RTPI, November 2014

<sup>5</sup> E.g. Regulation 1313/2013 Art. 5

<sup>6</sup> Clark and Clark 2014 p 23

Whilst there is some good practice in some countries and in some places, this is not happening as much as it should. The solution is what we call **strategic planning** i.e. planning across local authority boundaries.

“Successful city economies need efficient transport, skilled workers, quality housing, good public space and amenities. But city economies don’t stop at local authority boundaries... 50% of commuters live and work in different local authorities”<sup>7</sup>

### Not only cities

Whilst the world is increasingly one in which city regions compete, issues of strategic planning are not limited specifically to cities and their immediate surroundings. Throughout the UK and Ireland the towns and countryside are also critical to economic growth. And in these areas the issues of coordination across boundaries are no less significant than in cities. This can be true in relation to remote areas, where the issue may be how to draw together strong support across an area for lobbying for investment in competition with vocal cities. In rural areas close to cities the issue is how to represent and coordinate areas whose voice is potentially overshadowed by strong neighbours.

In both these situations, the effectiveness of cooperation within the more rural regions is critical. This is both because a joined-up voice is stronger, but also because it is more credible. If there are questions around the shortage of land for development, a strong indication that the area in question has resolved local disputes around this issue will add credibility to its interactions in the wider world. This also works in reverse: where certain kinds of development are sought after, rather than resisted, again consensus within a strategic planning area on where this investment is to go to mutual benefit will very much increase the case for having it.

In the UK, uniquely among rich nations, the economic performance of the non-city part of the country is better than the city part (if London is excluded). For example if the “Core Cities” in England performed at the national average, they would put £1.3 billion extra into the economy every year.<sup>8</sup> This is one reason for perhaps viewing the non-city part of the country in a different light from how it is viewed in much of Continental Europe, where a key concern is with the prosperity of remote regions. The reasons for this are a very strong counterurbanisation trend from 1920 to around 1990 in

which jobs were lost from cities across the board and grew very substantially in small towns, and the consequences of having a small land area, which means that few areas are remote at all.

### All this means that:

- International comparisons can only go so far in seeking the best governance and practice arrangements for strategic spatial planning in the UK and Ireland.
- Different arrangements are likely to be appropriate in the different countries of the UK and Ireland.
- Different arrangements are likely to be needed even within our nations.
- Solutions need to work in urbanised and less urbanised areas, and may need to differ between them.

*In the central part of this paper we show examples of models for strategic planning at home and abroad, and have identified various characteristics of effective practice.*

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<sup>7</sup> Breaking Boundaries, Centre for Cities 2014

<sup>8</sup> Core Cities Prospectus, 2013

# Cooperation between local governments brings major benefits

Within any potential area for strategic planning the success of the enterprise will depend on it being worthwhile for all participants to engage. This can be a major challenge, especially where there is a central city surrounded by more rural areas or outlying towns as the non-city areas can sometimes perceive little benefit in cooperating. And in addition they may fear dominance from a central city. We have looked at cases where cooperation has nevertheless worked and found that the success factor was identifying how all contributing areas can benefit.

The Communauté Urbaine of **Lille-Metropole** in Northern France is an area with a large number of separate local authorities. It faced serious industrial decline in the 1970s. In particular the towns of Roubaix and Tourcoing, which are large, had rising unemployment as a result of competition to their native textile industries from outside Europe. The solution adopted by the conurbation was to promote Lille city – at the centre of the conurbation – as the leading location for new types of industries.<sup>9</sup>



Lille-Europe

But creating new jobs in Lille would not necessarily benefit the communities where the jobs were most being lost. So the other communities were enabled to benefit through the creation of excellent public transport which enabled citizens to participate in the growth of Lille. A 32-km metro line was built from Lille to Roubaix and Tourcoing making Roubaix only 20 minutes from Lille centre. In addition the Communauté funded city centre renewal and housing renewal projects there.

But now, having secured a firm start in one location, the wider city region has successfully developed a wider spread of new jobs focussed round seven centres, not just in Lille, ranging from health-based industries (Eurasanté) through to textile innovation (Roubaix) and logistics (Tourcoing). These centres form a strategy of clusters that deal with all the elements in the supply chain from design and training to production and retail.<sup>10</sup>

A critical factor is the formulation of the Comité Grand Lille in 1993 comprising business, politicians and academics to bid (unsuccessfully) to host the 2004 Olympic Games and then (successfully) for the 2004 European Capital of Culture. This drew not only different sectors together but also ensured that all parts of the city region participated in the benefits of the bids.

The **Greater Manchester Combined Authority (GMCA)** is a new model of governance for a city-region, provided for by the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009. Whilst it builds on The Association of Greater Manchester Authorities (AGMA) model of voluntary collaboration between local authorities through a Joint Committee, the GMCA is a statutory body with its functions set out in legislation. These functions, which cover the Greater Manchester area, include all the transport functions previously overseen by Greater Manchester Integrated Transport Authority, plus some economic development and regeneration functions. A new set of transport functions, notably those adopting responsibility for traffic light signals and reports on road traffic levels have also been delegated by the constituent councils to the GMCA.

The Authority's constitution is set out in an Operating Agreement, which has been approved by all 10 constituent councils. As a body, the GMCA comprises the Leaders of the 10 constituent councils in Greater Manchester (or their substitutes). It meets on the last Friday of every month, following the convention

<sup>9</sup> P Hall (2014) *Good Cities Better Lives*, Routledge

<sup>10</sup> C Colomb (2007) *Making Connections: Transforming People and Places in Europe*, JRF

established by the AGMA Executive Board which continues to meet immediately after the GMCA meeting.

One of the key issues facing an area such as Greater Manchester is the question of winners and losers and the greater good. How can those supporting greater cooperation convince all players that it is in their interests to work together, when that can mean local areas missing out?

The TANGO research for the European Spatial Observatory Network (ESPON) has investigated the way in which Greater Manchester has become a concept which authorities other than Manchester City (which is little more than one fifth of the total population) can buy into. The first is in establishing local understanding of the concept:

“Whilst most of those living within the territory covered by the combined authority would have very little understanding of the nature and role of the GMCA there was a strong cultural affinity to the notion of a Manchester city region. One of the drivers for the regional affinity may have been the various high profile city region projects [such as] ... the Commonwealth Games and the failed Olympic bid ...”<sup>11</sup>

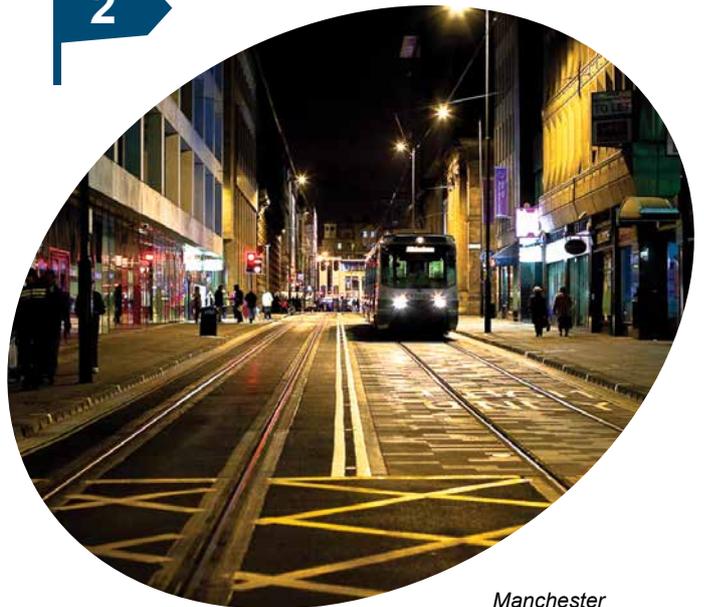
The AGMA has a skeleton staff and works closely with officers in the constituent authorities. The planning lead for AGMA is also chief planner for the City of Salford. His view on the role is that when acting for GM as a whole he is fully able to discharge that function with a view to the best outcome for GM as a whole. Under the previous strategic planning arrangements of a county and 10 district councils which operated from 1974 to 1986 such an approach would have been less likely and districts tended to be at odds with the county.

Whilst Greater Manchester has made considerable strides in a wide range of policy areas, the authorities have not yet agreed how housing will be distributed amongst them, meaning that at present the strategic planning arrangements are not yet serving a purpose in facilitating local plan making.<sup>12</sup> However the councils have set out a programme for the production of a joint statutory plan for the entire conurbation which will be out for consultation as

options in 2016, publication in 2017 and adopted in 2018.

The UK Treasury issued a statement in November 2014 saying that Greater Manchester will be getting its own directly-elected mayor who will have “powers over strategic planning including the power to create a statutory spatial framework for the city region”. The statement has the support of GMCA. We will need clarification on whether this will supplant the joint plan or be effectively the same vehicle.<sup>13</sup>

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Manchester  
by night

<sup>11</sup> [http://www.espon.eu/export/sites/default/Documents/Projects/AppliedResearch/TANGO/Case\\_Study\\_7\\_Greater\\_Manchester.pdf](http://www.espon.eu/export/sites/default/Documents/Projects/AppliedResearch/TANGO/Case_Study_7_Greater_Manchester.pdf)

<sup>12</sup> <http://www.bury.gov.uk/index.aspx?articleid=6047>

<sup>13</sup> GMCA suggests this will be “in line with” the existing framework 3.11.14

# Arrangements for strategic planning benefit from being locally-designed

There is a wide-spread acceptance of a principle of *subsidiarity* whereby decisions which affect areas are taken as close to them as possible. This principle even applies to designing *how* decisions affecting an area should be taken. This includes how *cooperation* itself should be designed.

By its very nature cooperation requires working and – crucially – compromise. It is hard to see cooperation working under duress, especially where political differences exist. This can mean that the areas which work together are not perhaps the most optimal in statistical terms; however finding municipalities which want to work together, provided they are contiguous, has advantages when political choices have to be made.

We can point to a number of cases where locally-designed cooperation appears to be working well. In **Cambridgeshire**, the local planning authorities have formed a Joint Strategic Planning Unit whose purpose is to handle matters which concern all the authorities. The JSPU carries forward the *Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Structure Plan 2003* which set out clear directions of growth for the City of Cambridge and its surroundings.

The JSPU works with local authorities, and with relevant strategic bodies, to help develop a coherent approach to planning across the area. It supports the local authorities in addressing the duty to cooperate. It produced a Memorandum of Cooperation in 2013 which set out how the authorities would cooperate.

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Trumpington Meadows,  
Cambridge



It facilitated a Strategic Spatial Priorities document which set out the investment priorities for the subregion. The Cambridge and South Cambridgeshire Sustainable Development Strategy Review sets out the appropriate levels of housing development in the component districts of the area.

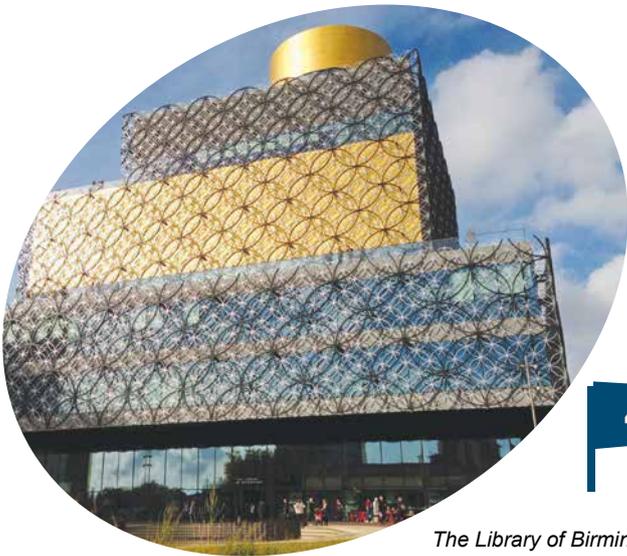
The JSPU is not formally linked to the Greater Cambridge and Peterborough Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) but there are strong overlaps between their areas, and the JSPU has been assisting the LEP in its work on a Strategic Economic Growth Plan. There are strong advantages to undertaking strategic economic, transport and housing planning in a coordinated manner.

By contrast, in the **Greater Birmingham** area, the local enterprise partnership has itself formed the basis of an area for strategic planning. The Greater Birmingham and Solihull LEP has established a process for strategic planning in its area which does not necessarily follow a functional economic geography, but reflects those councils which are happy to work together. Given the necessary trade-offs which a truly effective process of strategic planning will involve, the concept of building on political relationships which work is helpful. The LEP authorities have made a number of pledges including:

*“GBS LEP area local authorities will work together to deliver a strategic planning framework that promotes growth and assists in the delivery of the GBS LEP Economic Strategy”*

The LEP authorities produced a Spatial Plan for Recovery and Growth<sup>14</sup> in September 2013 and consulted local communities and stakeholders on it. A final plan is awaited. A critical test of the success of this approach based on voluntary cooperation will be the extent to which the overspill population of Birmingham will be accommodated in the other parts of the LEP area. A further issue is the possibility that Birmingham (alone) might form a combined authority with Black Country.

<sup>14</sup> <http://centreofenterprise.com/strategic-spatial-framework-plan>



The Library of Birmingham

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A key objective identified in the *Solent Local Growth Plan* (produced by the Solent Local Enterprise Partnership which has a very similar area) is to unlock critical employment sites and enable new housing to support a growing workforce. The Plan identifies 24,000 new homes as a target by 2020. The current *South Hampshire Strategy* adopted in October 2012, provides a framework to inform and support the preparation of statutory local plans which will assist the Solent area to plan for housing in a concerted manner. It is bold in proposing how homes (and many other issues including employment) should be distributed across the subregion.

Further to the publication of the new joint *South Hampshire Strategic Housing Market Assessment* in January 2014, preparation to review the current South Hampshire Strategy to 2036 is underway which will bring the evidence base in the SHMA with a range of other factors to consider what development should be planned beyond 2026 to support the anticipated level of growth in the PUSH area.

Voluntary relationships, however ideal, may alter over time as a consequence of changes in local politics or key staff leaving. This change might be towards more joining up with areas currently outside, or it might be towards fragmentation. There is a question regarding how such relationships which are formed initially can be made to last, and whether some form of concordat with a longish time frame is needed. Otherwise commitments made by a grouping which can dissolve tomorrow will be of little practical value.

One area which has persisted in its political and staff relationships over a considerable period is the **Partnership for Urban South Hampshire (PUSH)**. This has long antecedents but came especially to the fore in the process that the 72 councils of the former South East Region used in creating their regional spatial strategy (RSS) in the early 2000s. The RSS was built up from a series of sub-regions one of which was South Hampshire. The district and city authorities of the subregion, along with the County Council, worked in a partnership to produce a strategic plan. With the abolition of the RSS, the partnership has remained, and works roughly alongside a local enterprise partnership with similar boundaries. It is now working to assist the process of the duty to cooperate between local planning authorities so as to smooth the path towards local plan adoption.



Gunwharf Quays, Portsmouth

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# Strategic planning needs to cover a wide range of areas of public policy

A new form of planning was introduced in England and Wales<sup>15</sup> in the Town & Country Planning Act 1968 - the “Structure Plan”. The 1947-era development plans which gave a use for every acre of the plan area had proved very slow to produce. A research report in 1965 proposed a new form of planning, with ideas taken from military and management science.

Structure plans concentrated on broad strategies and critically did not have a map with recognisable streets and houses on it, but instead a “key diagram” showing the long term strategy for broad areas. They covered a range of issues including transport, social housing, and education. They were required to be approved by the Secretary of State in Whitehall. The last sentence of his approval letter invariably ran on these lines: “Approval of this plan does not commit the government to any expenditure”. This effectively bound the hands of the structure plans in England behind their backs, as they were not in a position to have a bearing on the critical issues facing the areas they were covering.

Despite the limitations of the genre, some structure plans in the UK have been associated with substantial influence over public spending. One possible reason for this is that in parts of the pre-devolution UK, such as Scotland, there were shorter lines of communication between localities and the centre where decisions were made. The way that resource decisions that are interrelated at local level (such as land use and transport, or land use, schools and health care provision) track back to separate decision making regimes at the centre can be very damaging to growth.

For example the joint planning arrangements for the **Glasgow and Clyde Valley** metropolitan area were originally established in 1996 for the production of a structure plan followed local government reorganisation, but have been harnessed to provide the spatial planning context for a range of action programmes in the fields of

economic development, urban renewal, health promotion, housing, transportation and the environment.

As a result a series of complementary common perspectives were developed in an attempt to re-engage with agencies and partners following local government reorganisation and to bridge the gap in economic development, transport and the environment created by the termination of Strathclyde Regional Council. The common perspectives:

- Set out formally a common understanding of issues, for example, through a common SWOT analysis for their particular field of action;
- Provided a spatial interpretation of the policies of the Agencies in question; to set the Development Plan’s policies within a wider context of Joint Action;
- Demonstrated that the need for economic development requires not only new development sites but also linkage to Job Training Programmes; and
- Defined key areas of joint action required to implement the strategy.

The core policies of the 2000 Glasgow and Clyde Valley [Structure] Plan were linked to delivery mechanisms. Local plans were as a result prepared in tandem, such that seven of the eight councils had finalised or adopted



Clyde Waterfront

<sup>15</sup> Structure Plans were also subsequently introduced in Scotland

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plans within a year of the approval of the 2000 Structure Plan. The 2005 update of the Structure Plan sought to extend common perspectives into thematic 'Joint Action Programmes' which link the Plan more clearly to the programmes of the implementation agencies and to delivery mechanisms. The effectiveness of the Plan was reflected in:

- Promoting Urban Renewal: Since 1996 there has been a net annual reduction in vacant land of 106ha. The three Flagship Initiatives identified through the Plan were taken up by the development agencies, now have been embedded in the National Planning Framework as key priorities - the Clyde Gateway, Clyde Waterfront and Ravenscraig. These collectively seek to promote 25,000 houses and a comparable number of jobs.
- Widening Strategic Cooperation: The collective action achieved through the joint strategic planning arrangements encouraged wider collaboration in sectoral policy areas. As a result, the Joint Committee was used as the mechanism for extending the level of cooperation between councils by preparing complementary Joint Transport and Greenspace Strategies.

This has resulted in the establishment of dedicated teams to deliver these strategies and associated funding streams. The Development Plan was also one of the core source documents for the City Vision Report which formed the basis for a strategic Community Planning Partnership across all eight council areas in the metropolitan area.

- Harnessing additional resources: Similarly, the 2000 Plan was adopted as the spatial development framework which underpinned the European Regional Development Fund single programme document (1999-2006) and was the basis for a GRO Grant programme of 'gap funding' for private housing on brownfield sites. It was also a core source document used to harness £70 million additional resources through the Scottish Government's Cities Growth Fund. Subsequently, the Plan was used as the basis of a bid for a £60 million five-year rolling programme for the treatment of vacant and derelict land and to kick start a £50 million multi-agency Greenspace partnership.



City Hall, London

In a very different kind of context, strategic planning is being undertaken in **Greater London**. Much is made of the Mayor of London having the only statutory strategic plan in England, but of particular interest here is the responsibility of the Mayor for an increasing number of policy areas. He is now in charge of:

- Transport (except nearly all heavy rail, and airports)
- Housing funding
- Housing land-use allocations

London is facing accommodating an additional 1.4 million people in the next 35 years, if current growth rates are continued. The Mayor has published a draft Infrastructure Plan<sup>16</sup> to examine the next 35 years to 2050 to see how the full range of city infrastructure – including housing – can be provided. This process covers a wide range of policy areas – transport, green infrastructure, digital connectivity, energy, water and waste. However the Mayor points out that current regulatory regimes for many private infrastructure providers militate against supporting the level of growth London needs.

The plan addresses an area wider than just the area controlled by the Mayor (Greater London). However there is a serious weakness here as the areas outside London have not been co-producers of the plan, only consultees.

<sup>16</sup> <http://www.london.gov.uk/priorities/business-economy/vision-and-strategy/infrastructure-plan-2050>

# Strategic planning works well if it has strong local political buy-in

If strategic planning is to be really effective, it must be a mainstream commitment from the politicians in the constituent member councils or municipalities.

The current arrangements for strategic planning in Scotland following the Planning Act of 2006 require that Strategic Development Planning Areas are designated by Ministers and committees of councillors who determine production of plans for the four city regions of Scotland.

The plan for the Perth-and-Dundee city region is an excellent example of a plan which concentrates on the basics, but does not duck important issues for the region.

**TAYplan Strategic Development Planning Authority** is a partnership with the purpose of preparing, monitoring and reviewing the Strategic Development Plan for the Dundee and Perth City Region.

Effective partnership working is at the heart of how TAYplan operates. Whilst Scottish planning legislation allows a constituent Planning Authority within a strategic development planning area to submit its own strategy should agreement not be reached, such a scenario is not on TAYplan's agenda.

TAYplan is governed by a Joint Committee made up of three local councillors from each of the four constituent councils. The chair rotates annually and meetings are held 2-3 times each year. The elected members use the opportunity of the Joint Committee to informally discuss other cross boundary projects and issues.

The Strategic Development Plan takes account of the Single Outcome Agreements each council has agreed with the Scottish Government. TAYplan has a role in assisting Government to achieve national outcomes, especially those related to planning as set out in the National Planning Framework and Scottish Planning Policy. Therefore, the TAYplan outcomes are aligned to national planning outcomes and those of the constituent councils.

The partnership has to bring together different political groups and ensure buy-in and ownership of the strategic vision, outcomes and spatial strategy. In doing so it is important to have effective communication, briefing

elected members regularly, discussing the key issues ahead of committee meetings and where required making changes to best ensure that the plan meets political, as well as other, needs.

In practice, all elected members (local councillors, MSPs, MPs, and MEPs) are kept briefed on the review and preparation of the strategic plan. At key stages of the Plan process, elected members are further briefed.

A successful partnership requires effective communication to ensure that all partners, political and non-political, are kept informed, provided opportunities to raise and discuss issues as an integral part of a Plan making process, and all seeking to achieve a win-win to ensure ownership. Strategic planning sets the high level strategy and policies leaving local decisions to local elected members. Getting the balance of political decisions required at the strategic level and what decisions and flexibility is best taken at a local level is part of the art in successful strategic planning.

Although the final say in approving the plan for the Tayside region rests with Scottish Ministers, the key task in preparing it and achieving buy-in rests locally. TAYPlan won the RTPI's highest award, the Silver Jubilee Cup, in 2012.



*Dundee Waterfront*

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The **Queensland Government** is committed to delivering a new generation of statutory regional plans. These regional plans seek to provide strategic direction to achieve regional outcomes that align with the state's interest in planning and development. While land use planning is primarily the responsibility of local government, the state has an interest in ensuring that broader regional outcomes are achieved through the application of state policy in local planning.<sup>17</sup>

The purpose of the new regional plans is to identify regional outcomes to help achieve state interests. Regional policies are used to facilitate these outcomes by addressing existing or emerging regional issues, such as competition between land uses. A new approach to statutory regional plans is being driven through collaboration with local governments, key industry groups and the wider community to ensure the aspirations of all regional stakeholders are considered.

South East Queensland is the most populous part of the State, with around four million people. There are 11 individual local authorities including the state capital Brisbane. The South East Queensland Regional Planning Committee (RPC) plays a key role in advising the State Minister on the review of the emerging regional plan.

South East Queensland has a Council of Mayors which supervises strategic planning activity in the region, leading to coordination of the planning activities of the individual areas. It also plays a key role in advocacy at State and Commonwealth (national) level. The mayors of all local governments in the region are members of the RPC, and local government technical officers are included in the advisory groups.

The Council of Mayors (SEQ) meets every two months, five times a year. Every Mayor has an equal vote in its decisions and the constitution states that decisions be made by consensus where possible. The Council of Mayors (SEQ) has three standing committees comprising councillors and senior officers working on three key priority areas:

- Regional Planning and Growth Management Committee
- Infrastructure Committee
- Environment and Sustainability Committee



*Gold Coast, Queensland,  
Australia*

The Council of Mayors (SEQ) is supported by a AUS\$2 million budget, set annually by the Mayors, with levies agreed by all councils based on a population share. A strategic planning workshop is held early each year to determine and agree priorities for the Council of Mayors (SEQ) for the year.

<sup>17</sup> <http://www.dsdiq.qld.gov.au/regional-planning>

## Close links with business are vital

Through the history of working on strategic planning a common difficulty is the divergence of business and other agendas. Business may need to operate on short time horizons; planning operations may require long gestation. This has a number of drawbacks. It can mean that the needs of business are not addressed at the strategic level, and options for doing so are thereby limited a local level. In turn this can lead to business opposition to potentially fragile local alliances. Worse, it can mean local economies' growth is weakened.



*Cardiff Bay*

**The South East Wales Strategic Planning Group (SEWSPG)** is formed of ten LPAs in the south east of Wales. SEWSPG provides a forum in South East Wales within which neighbouring LPAs can discuss issues, particularly those relating to the development of their Local Development Plans (LDPs). These issues range from population projections, to housing allocations, to strategic employment sites, as well as many other factors.

Recently SEWSPG has developed a regional evidence base using Welsh Government support, through a regional LDP mapping exercise and Employment Database as a response to the Draft Planning Bill (Wales) which is indicating that a Strategic (Regional) land-use plan is likely to become mandatory at Cardiff Capital City Regional Level – which is coterminous with the area currently covered by SEWSPG.

Parallel and complementary work has also been undertaken by SEWDER (made up of Environment Directors from the 10 local authorities) Business Group on a cluster analysis of key sectors in the region. This work will now continue with the procurement of MINT data to highlight further areas where the local authorities can add value to the work already underway by the business sector.

SEWSPG hopes to support work on the emerging City Region by feeding into SEWDER and via that Group into the Regional Leaders' Board. As the Economic Development and Planning agenda in South East Wales appears to be moving towards a regional focus, based on the economic entity of the Cardiff Capital region, the work

done by SEWSPG could save time and money by building on the planning knowledge and skills/bases which already exists in the 10 local authorities.

In England Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) were established in 2010 to replace Regional Development Agencies. The Coalition government required them to be led by the private sector and for them to display a strong entrepreneurial aspect. This aim appears to have succeeded, with the look and feel of LEPs being more business-focussed and less official than RDAs. They have also undertaken a great deal of activity given a small input of public money. (However questions remain concerning the ability of leading business people to maintain long-term major voluntary commitments on top of pressing day jobs.)

Under current arrangements there is no obligation on LEPs to undertake any strategic spatial planning per se. Their principal achievement has been in animating the business community to effectively undertake a vast amount of voluntary activity and to confront and process strategic planning matters such as skills, transport and land availability for housing and employment purposes. However LEPs do have a strong potential to establish what the business voice is within a city region or county. This is a valuable stepping stone towards a strong business input into strategic spatial planning which can provide a firm backdrop to plan making by individual councils. However, they are not a substitute for democratic decision making.

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LEPs have now produced Strategic Economic Plans. These are business-based documents. But in many areas LEPs have recognised that a good housing supply is essential for local growth. For example the **Lancashire Enterprise Partnership's** Strategic Economic Plan includes:<sup>18</sup>

“A strategic transport programme seeking £195.7m in competitive Growth Deal funding to release the economic and housing growth potential of Preston, East Lancashire, Lancaster, and Skelmersdale in West Lancashire, ....”

The Lancashire LEP also ensures strong linkage between housing and economic growth and transport investment, an issue high on the priorities of the RTP1:

“4.4 Ensuring major transport projects and investments are fully aligned with the delivery of key economic and housing growth priorities across Lancashire”

This business-led approach to subregional economic planning has operated consistently with the approach being adapted to land-use planning:

“7.139 To maximise opportunities local partners are currently undertaking reviews of Green Belt to accommodate new housing development and local plans are adopting a strongly market-facing approach to site allocations.”

Three councils in “Central Lancashire” (Preston, South Ribble and Chorley) have produced a single joint core strategy adopted in 2012 which makes all the housing allocations in broad principle. It is being supplemented by detailed plans in smaller areas around the three boroughs.

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The **Black Country** comprises the four council areas of Wolverhampton, Sandwell, Dudley and Walsall. It has demonstrated strong joint working for a number of years now and in 2011 adopted a joint core strategy to guide development. This has the advantage of both taking a strategic view and also dispensing with the need for costly individual core strategies for each council area. The joint working has evolved into deep connections with the Black Country LEP which is co-terminous. This is demonstrated by the Black Country Strategic Economic Plan which is fully



Walsall Art Gallery

intermeshed with the core strategy as a fully aligned process. For example the headline pitch says:

“We have a long-established vision for the Black Country in 2033 which provides a firm foundation for our local growth deal. Our aim is to grow our global supply chain with the world class skills it demands, to maximise the benefits of our location, to exploit our industrial and geological heritage and to provide high quality housing to meet the needs of a balanced growing population. Our ground-breaking core strategy provides a pro-growth planning framework to deliver this vision.”<sup>19</sup>

The Strategic Economic Plan incorporates the housing proposals of the core strategy both in overall volume and also in respect of specific sites. The SEP also includes short term proposals to accelerate the delivery of 2000 homes before 2021, thus demonstrating the full potential of the LEP as a delivery body for the strategic and joined-up policies of the local authorities in its area. Interestingly the SEP includes as basis for its bid for funds the past performance of the area in housing delivery of 15,000 net increases in housing stock since 2006. This shows that the Black Country's proposals are not simply aspirational.

<sup>18</sup> <http://www.lancashirelep.co.uk/media/8856/LEP-strategic-economic-plan.pdf>

<sup>19</sup> <http://www.blackcountrylep.co.uk/about-us/black-country-plans-for-growth/strategic-economic-plan>

# Cooperation needs to reach beyond the boundaries of a strategic planning area

There is no perfect size of area for the practice of strategic planning. And for some purposes it may be appropriate for strategic planning to take place at two different scales at the same time. One way this can happen is for neighbouring strategic planning areas to themselves cooperate. This can enable appropriate action to be taken across wider areas such as large river catchments or areas for strategic transport investment.

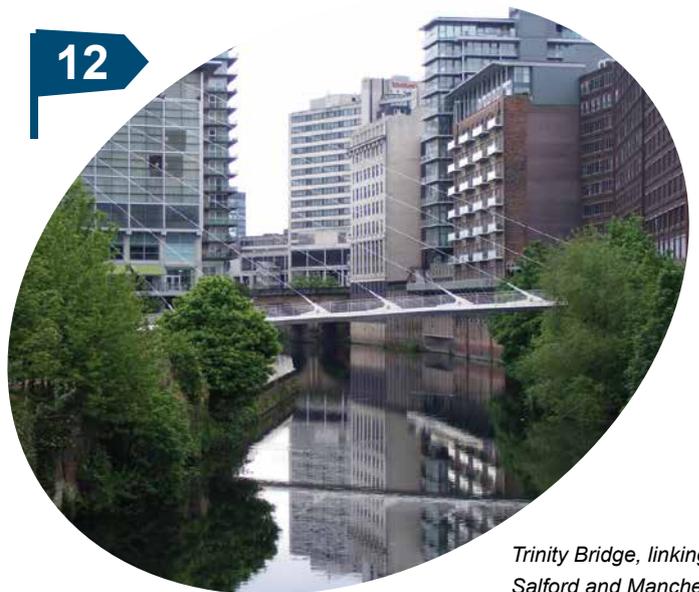
Under the 1997-2010 Labour government in England there were three regional development agencies in the **North of England**. The Government developed proposals for establishing a northern initiative to promote economic growth, based on the concept of a more positive statement of the North's capacity for growth. There was a generally positive response to the Government's suggestion for a pan-northern initiative. A Management Group was established with representatives from regions, cities and Whitehall and was chaired by One North East Regional Development Agency. Initial work culminated in the publication of a *The Northern Way Growth Strategy* in September 2004 which identified 10 Investment Priorities<sup>20</sup> including three on connectivity/transport.

The transport work of the Northern Way focussed on improvements to connectivity between Northern cities starting with the "Northern Hub" scheme intended to deliver:

- 700 more trains to run between the major towns and cities in the North every day
- 3.5m more passengers every year
- Quicker journey times
- £530m of targeted investment to help the North continue to thrive

The Northern Way undertook an initial study on this concept, and supported the development of the project by Network Rail through the Governance for Railway Investment Projects (GRIP) stages with a view to it being included in the next Control Period (CP5, 2014-19). The

Northern Way liaised with regional stakeholders to gain support for the scheme across the North, communicating the regional benefits of the project notwithstanding the infrastructure works being focused predominantly on the Greater Manchester area. The issue of concentration of investment in one place but wider spread benefits is an important one. If the strategic planning clusters of Liverpool, Manchester and Leeds city regions had not been able to establish links, it seems that such investment in a Hub would have been less likely. Moreover the coming together of four city regions had the consequence that attention could be placed on the issues of transPennine travel and freight movement, which might otherwise not have been a priority for any single one of them.



*Trinity Bridge, linking Salford and Manchester*

The momentum of joint working on transport has been maintained beyond the Northern Hub towards a wider ambition to further decrease journey times and increase connectivity. The city regions of Liverpool, Greater Manchester, Leeds, Sheffield and the North East LEP have combined to make a joint case for transport investment of £15B. A key element in this is the desire to allow firms to benefit from access to wider labour markets. Intercity commuting between cities in the transPennine corridor is less than would be expected by their proximity. The cities can work towards a single labour market and

<sup>20</sup> This account is derived from: <http://www.northernwaytransportcompact.com/downloads/Evaluation/Evaluation%20Final%20Report%20April%202011.pdf>

thus benefit from agglomeration economies as if they were a single larger city. This is estimated to lead to accelerated growth both for the city regions and also for the UK.

Boundaries between countries may cut across patterns of movement of people and goods, or across areas with strong environmental connections (e.g. river basins). The border between the **Republic of Ireland** and **Northern Ireland** is the context for three cross-national-border strategic planning groups: an eastern seaboard group centred on Newry and Dundalk, the central group (see below) and a north western group. All appear to be examples of successful cross border strategic planning.

**ICBAN the Irish Central Border Area Network** has published a Regional Strategic Framework, which is a spatial plan dealing with the issues affecting the region either side of the border. ICBAN is a bottom up grouping, established by councillors either side of the border in 1995. It used existing commonalities with clear and obvious benefits from doing it and is supported by Department of Regional Development (NI) and Department for Communities and Environment (RoI) and the EU. This work was shortlisted as a project in the RTPI's *Awards for Planning Excellence* 2014.



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*Enniskillen Castle, Fermanagh*

# General principles for strategic planning

The foregoing examination of good practice, and its experience over the years in strategic planning practice, coupled with the discussions held across the UK and Ireland in 2014, has led the RTPI to conclude that strategic planning should follow these general principles:

Strategic planning should **have focus** to be efficient in the use of resources and clarity of purpose and it should be **genuinely strategic**, dealing only with issues that require treatment at a higher level than individual municipalities. It is easy for strategic plans to become overlong and deal with a wide range of issues which are either satisfactorily covered by localities, or alternatively by national planning policy (e.g. Scottish Planning Policy, National Planning Policy Framework [England]). It is not entirely clear why strategic plans need to include broad policy statements like “all development will seek to mitigate climate change” especially if this objective is covered by legal and national policy provisions.

Strategic planning should be **spatial**. By this we mean that it **should make choices between places**. The RTPI has recently produced a paper entitled *Thinking Spatially* in its *Planning Horizons* Centenary research series in which we set a challenge to policy makers everywhere (not just in planning) to recognise and act on the fact that some activities – large-scale housing, employment, higher education - are better undertaken in some places within a city- or county- region than others.

Applying this principle to the particular kind of interauthority strategic planning which is the concern of this paper, means that strategic plans need to set out where major investments in housing, transport and economic growth will happen. Making these decisions at the appropriate geographic scale will make them more likely to occur and also make it easier to ensure that environmental considerations and a degree of fairness between localities are observed.

It should be **responsive**, being efficient in preparation and with a dynamic review mechanism capable of adapting to change. In many cases the strategic planning function acts as a guide to other decisions (on planning, on investment) taken further down the line. If the plan is cumbersome to prepare, it can mean these other functions are delayed.

Strategic planning should be **deliverable**, to be effective by being linked to expenditure programmes. Learning from the experiences in Glasgow and London, it is clear that strategic planning in name only is purposeless. There must be buy in from bodies with the ability to bring about implementation. The RTPI has looked at this critical question in its *Planning Horizons* paper *Making Better Decisions for Places*.

There should be **collaborative** governance structures to ensure proactive engagement by all stakeholders. By “collaboration” we mean that partners work together to see how they can deliver each other’s agendas. This is contrasted with what might be termed “cooperation”, where participation is restricted to consent to proposals so long as they do not interfere with my agenda. One of our concerns in the *Horizons* paper is to examine whether this kind of collaboration is more likely where decision making is concentrated at the strategic planning level rather than dispersed (especially dispersed upwards and away from strategic planning areas to either nations or small localities). The appreciation of other’s agendas may be much easier if you can see the place context in which other organisations are operating.

Collaboration also requires **strong leadership** both politically and professionally. When entering into negotiations is necessary for participants to be able to carry their areas with them. If their choices are very fettered, negotiations will suffer. To reach that position, trust in leadership needs to take root and flourish.

The process should be **locally-fashioned** to ensure that the governance arrangements are sensitive to local culture and communities of interests. Our evidence from England has demonstrated the value of allowing areas to make their own choices regarding who to associate with. There are also strong advantages to permitting the internal governance arrangements of strategic planning collaborations to be a matter for areas to determine for themselves, subject to compliance with issues such as accounting practice.

The most enduring collaborations are likely to be those with a clear line of **accountability to local electorates**. This may not need to involve a special layer of “strategic” councillors elected separately from local councillors: indeed this would be a less desirable approach as it would not necessarily deliver the commitment of the constituent councils/municipalities.<sup>21</sup>

<sup>21</sup> Experience of the two-tier planning system run in England until 2004 would tend to endorse this at least in some areas.

A common alternative is to have a joint board comprised of elected representatives of each area dedicated to strategic planning. Another is to have strategic decisions taken by a leaders' board. The latter has the advantage of facilitating closer links between the spatial planning and other objectives.

There are a number of **other attributes**<sup>22</sup> of strategic planning which are not peculiar to this scale of planning but characterise planning more generally. We list them here, but do not examine them in detail:

- Evidence based, including assessment for economic, social and environmental sustainability
- Involving the community – specifically to Århus principles of consultation
- Pursuance of social justice
- Linked to implementation schedules with professional programming

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<sup>22</sup> There are numerous sources for these.  
One example is <http://neat.ecosystemsknowledge.net/principles.html>

# Country recommendations: England

## “Duty to Cooperate”

The “duty to cooperate” introduced in the Localism Act 2012 requires local planning authorities to undertake meaningful discussions around strategic planning matters but it is not a duty to agree.

The duty to cooperate has worked well in some places, but in nothing like enough places given the importance of strategic issues such as transport, housing and the environment. The duty is enforced by the government’s Planning Inspectorate, which has the power to reject local plans which do not demonstrate “cooperation”. This has been done on many occasions – either outright, or through requesting the local authority to try again.

However there is no *positive mechanism* to bring about effective strategic planning: only a negative mechanism to prevent non-strategic planning. This is insufficient, given the importance of strategic planning matters and the fact that local authority boundaries do not match functional economic areas.

While strategic *town-and-country* planning is currently a challenge, the Coalition has been making progress with a broader decentralisation / strategic agenda. Some of this builds on policies of the previous government, such as the creation of combined authorities which are legal entities with specific subregional tasks. In addition groups of local authorities have entered into City Deals, which give government grants for specific projects and a degree of flexibility in spending in return for commitments to meeting government objectives around growth. Local Enterprise Partnerships replaced regional development agencies as the preferred vehicle for promoting local (and larger-than-local) economic growth. They have produced strategic economic plans which include bids for government grants through the growth deal process, and are also the Government’s chosen mechanism for the subnational administration of European Union funding.

Despite the emphasis being put on cooperation between local authorities and business in city regions and counties, our current research into strategic planning around England suggests strikingly few places where agreement has been reached on housing, despite the link between jobs and homes being critical. It is all too easy for a wider area to make energetic plans for economic growth and thereby to benefit strongly from government investment without agreeing to the supporting housing growth.

Furthermore, an area might make assumptions around the treatment of environmental matters such as run off without sufficient discussion with other areas regarding the implications.

## Lessons from the past

There is a great deal of experience in effective strategic planning in England over the last 80 years produced within a range of contexts. Examples include:

- Voluntary - Sheffield Region (1930s)
- Central Government -The Greater London Plan (1940s) & South-East Study (1960s)
- Sub-regional - Notts, Derby & Leicester-Leicestershire (1970s)
- Regional - West Midlands Planning Advisory Conference & SERPLAN (1980s); West Midlands RSS (2000s)

This range of experience suggests that although there are benefits to having a dedicated strategic planning body, the lack of one does not prevent effective strategic planning if collaborative arrangements are properly supported, and go beyond mere cooperation. We have considered whether further primary legislation at this stage is the answer. Matters are now so urgent that we cannot afford the protracted delays that would be created by changing the system again when much more could be achieved within the current administrative frameworks than has been achieved to date. The RTPI considers the upheavals brought about by repeated changes to the system have contributed to delays in housing supply and in addressing other strategic issues. Therefore in the short term an approach which avoids legislation is needed.

## Local Enterprise Partnerships

The Labour and Conservative Parties appear to be committed to retaining LEPs.<sup>23</sup> These have been largely designed from the bottom up and they have demonstrated strong business and local government involvement. The geographic scale of LEPs corresponds broadly to the scale at which much strategic planning needs to take place. Therefore although sometimes originating in relationships of shared interests and political ties, most LEP areas are generally viable areas to undertake strategic planning. And indeed LEPs’ geographic scale also corresponds to that of counties, city-regions and Combined Authorities. In some areas these are coterminous. However the precise boundaries of LEPs, including many overlaps and some arguably unwieldy areas, means that as a long-term solution some tweaks would be needed. These will hopefully emerge from within the areas themselves.

<sup>23</sup> We are not clear on the Liberal Democrat position

## Way forward

We recommend that **local authorities form / maintain voluntary groupings at city-region or county scale to agree housing numbers and other matters of strategic importance**. These matters would include transport investment, key employment locations and environmental management. **These groupings should broadly align with LEP areas** and the approach to strategic matters should **align with the approach taken in LEPs' strategic economic plans and authorities' city deals**.

There will need to be continued and deepening cooperation between county and district councils in two-tier areas where counties have already been exercising strategic functions such as transport and taking a key role in LEPs.

It however needs to be recognised that even within the framework of LEPs and other administrative arrangements there is a need to overcome the current weaknesses in the level of cooperation. Our diagnosis of this is that there is not enough reason for planning authorities (in particular) to cooperate, and often strong reasons not to. Therefore we propose that a post 2015 **government needs to back up its potential statements on increasing housing supply with powerful, effective incentives to local authorities to plan properly for the long term, and to plan collectively**. There is already a mechanism to achieve this through the money awarded through Growth Deals and City Deals. Our proposal is that **future resources and powers of this kind should only be made available to areas which can demonstrate jointly agreed plans to cater for housing need**. This would be a much more substantial incentive to collaboration on housing planning than has ever been employed before and would have the additional advantage that it would be focussed on issues related to housing growth. In return, we propose that the content of Growth Deals and City Deals should be material considerations in planning decisions. This is possible because all government policy is capable of being a material consideration.

As well as providing hopefully some real incentives to plan effectively and cooperatively, this process would also have the practical benefit of assisting implementation. Whilst a process of allocating the location of housing growth is a necessary condition for effective strategic planning in England, it is by no means a sufficient condition. Growth and regeneration will not happen unless it is tied in to firm plans for physical and social infrastructure investment,

principally by the public sector and associated bodies such as utility companies and transport companies. (This can then lever in multiples of private investment.)

And the provision of such infrastructure through Growth and City Deals on the past model may not be sufficient. So when an area makes provision for housing at a certain scale, either government support for it should match what is required, or plans should be scaled down.

Given that we are not seeking at this stage further primary legislative changes, the duty to cooperate will remain on the statute book, but the planning system would not rely on it alone as at present, but it would simply be invoked in cases where incentives had failed to work, which undermine a national interest or where cooperation has been tokenistic or perverse.

The system proposed would enable strategic planning in England to achieve democratic accountability. Whilst this is in our view a matter for local areas to determine for themselves, there is currently a democratic deficit whereby decisions are being taken in one area which critically affect the well being of communities and individuals elsewhere but who have no effective voice. The process whereby groups of local authorities come together for strategic planning purposes would enable a variety of possible mechanisms of governance:

- Joint Planning Committee
- Leaders' Board

## Business and planning

There are two common fragilities:

- Overambitious strategic economic plans which are not supported by the level of housing needed, infrastructure and environmental frameworks and which do not have the broad support of local communities either
- Government allocating City Deal and Growth Deal money to areas which have not succeeded in reaching agreement on how collectively to meet their share of national housing need

These problems arise from insufficient coordination at local level between local planning activity and LEP strategic planning, and from a perhaps overgenerous attitude on the part of government. To correct this **Growth Deals should be made conditional on local authorities having agreed housing distributions and should be consistent with the housing proposed by local authority groupings.**

#### Wider still and wider

The economic and social geography of England is complex. There are areas where wider cooperation and collaboration than at city-region / sub-regional level is needed. In some areas cooperation between city regions and county areas would be necessary. Cooperation among the city regions of Liverpool, Greater Manchester, Sheffield and Leeds has been frequently proposed as a means of creating a greater second city mass within England to benefit from economies of scale.

Similarly we would argue it is essential for cross strategic border cooperation to take place in the London and South East region. At present (2014) the Mayor of London is proposing that London will undersupply its housing needs by at least 7000 a year. There is currently no forum which will decide how this currently unplanned overspill is catered for. A better mechanism would be through a consortium of strategic planning areas.

#### The further future

We consider that strategic planning is likely to be on an evolutionary journey, and hopefully a journey towards better and better solutions. The Scottish Referendum has spawned some discussion on decentralisation in England as well. Whilst our proposals are ones for immediate implementation, a future government with responsibility for England would do well to consider some further steps. These could include:

- Complete coverage of combined authorities across England
- Combined authorities to be coterminous with LEPs and vice versa
- Single deals to replace City Deals and Growth Deals
- Strategic economic plans to be signed off by combined authorities

- Combined authorities to have responsibility for various budgets, starting with housing and transport and moving on to education and health
- Combined authorities to have tax raising (or lowering) powers, probably based on property tax

#### The RTPI's Proposals for 2015

- Local authorities to form voluntary groupings in geographic areas of city-region or county scale (normally aligned with local enterprise partnerships)
- Local authorities in these groupings to agree housing numbers and other strategic matters in alignment with Strategic Economic Plans and City Deals
- Central government to drive this forward with strong but conditional incentives in transport, health and skills/education spending
- Local Enterprise Partnerships to align economic growth plans with strategic housing provision plans



## Country recommendations: Scotland

The Scottish Government recently commissioned a review of the Strategic Development Plans in Scotland.<sup>24</sup> It also subsequently published a response to this.<sup>25</sup> These have provided a useful focus for discussing the value of these plans as well as examining the issues of collaborative leadership and governance; effective engagement and scrutiny; housing and community building; transport and infrastructure; influence on delivery; and resourcing and skills.

The review usefully raised the profile of strategic planning in Scotland and acknowledges the important role that Scotland's city regions play, not only in terms of housing the majority of Scotland's population, but also as drivers of sustainable economic growth, and in terms of infrastructure and quality of life. The review and subsequent response from Scottish Government therefore act as a positive basis to build on the successes and lessons learned from strategic planning in Scotland to date.

### Role of Strategic Development Plans

Scotland has four Strategic Development Plans (SDPs) which are an important part of the planning framework in Scotland. They provide the context for planning Scotland's city regions of Glasgow, Edinburgh, Aberdeen and Dundee and work within the ambitions and priorities set out in the National Planning Framework and Scottish Planning Policy. Scottish Government's ongoing planning reform and the move to a truly plan led system with a clear hierarchy of plans in Scotland, mean that SDPs play an important role in setting out the strategic spatial planning context for plan making, and crucially for delivery of development.

SDPs are prepared by Strategic Development Planning Authorities (SDPAs), which are groups of planning authorities working together to produce these plans. The SDPAs work to joint committees made up of councillors from each of the authorities in the city region. **SDPAs must be able to work in a context that allows them to take long-term, high-level decisions which may be contentious but which are required to ensure that the city region functions economically, environmentally and socially.** Governance and cultures must avoid 'beggar thy neighbour' or parochial interests from councillors or officers.

SDPs need to be seen as key tools to provide certainty for planning authorities, developers, investors and communities. This requires them to provide a framework

to enable delivery by including a delivery focused Action Programme those links to, and influences decisions on, resources. SDPs, and their Action Programmes, should be seen as investment strategies as well as planning documents, that highlight future opportunities and assets that are to be valued. **SDP Action Programmes must be clearer and stronger so that they become the delivery document for spatial change within the city regions.**

SDPs provide a level of planning where often difficult strategic decisions can be made and where future plans for, and investment in, development and infrastructure can be linked to together. To do this there is a need to invest in the evidence base to ensure that decisions are made on a sound basis and that progress on objectives can be monitored and responded to.

### Integration

SDPs are more than planning documents; they are investment and marketing tools demonstrating the way in which the city regions will be shaped over time. Given this, **it is imperative that SDPs (and Local Development Plans) are better connected to Community Plans and single Outcome Agreements (SOAs).** At present Community Plans and SOAs are not always articulated spatially. Development plans provide an opportunity to do this. There is scope for joining up the development process for each of these plans to ensure that priorities, decision on investment and to better connect consultation. There are also opportunities for better integration in engaging with stakeholders and communities and on monitoring and research. RTPI Scotland is currently undertaking work on the disconnection between community planning and spatial planning, and aims to publish findings and suggested actions to tackle this.

Regional Transport Partnerships (RTPs) are currently involved with Community Planning Partnerships, but spatial planning does not have a seat at the table. There is a need to better link infrastructure to planning and SDPs provide the means to do this. Given this there is scope for increased alignment between SDPs and RTPs, particularly the spatial strategy of SDPs which should set the context for related strategies and policies, such as transport.

<sup>24</sup> <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Resource/0044/00448818.pdf>

<sup>25</sup> <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Resource/0045/00454434.pdf>

### Engagement

SDPs must be seen as a key tool in providing a long term spatial strategy setting out what should be developed where, and what should be protected and enhanced. This will involve early engagement with key interests from the public sector, private sector and communities. We are pleased to see increasingly creative approaches being used by SDPAs in engaging with stakeholders and are keen to see approaches developed that make engagement less of a 'one-off' but rather more of an ongoing dialogue. Key to this is **the need for SDPAs to be seen as key players in collaborative partnerships for their areas** that can help to bring together public sector bodies to agree what is in the plan and action programme.

### Process

There is concern that there have been no hearings on SDPs to date. **The Development Plan Examination should still be in public where justice can be seen to be done.** The lack of a hearing might be a problem in the sight of some sections of the community, insofar as objections went seemingly unheard.

### Skills and resources

The issues of skills and resourcing for the public sector in general are key issues in this debate, and particularly the resourcing of SDPAs and planning authorities taking forward the SDP allocations and policies within their Local Development Plans (LDPs). Resourcing of the SDPAs is a key consideration for the future, particularly given the small teams of strategic planners. **There is a need to ensure that the skills and knowledge sets required to undertake strategic planning is not lost.** Another key consideration is increasing the level of understanding of SDPAs amongst planning authorities, and this will involve an element of up skilling at both development planning and development management level. Investment in training for political and professional leaders should be supported.



Edinburgh

## Country recommendations: Wales

There is a stakeholder consensus in Wales supporting the need for strategic planning decisions on a scale between local and national. The Wales Spatial Plan (WSP), though not a development plan and now out of date, continues to set the context for Local Development Plans (LDPs). Failure to review and validate the WSP means it has become less credible and unable to fulfil its planning function.

The most populated areas of Wales face complex spatial issues and since 2008, a decline in economic growth. Matters relating to sustainable transport, energy generation and distribution, urbanisation, jobs and housing, and environmental quality go across administrative boundaries in these areas. Sectoral activities such as waste and transport planning create a compendium of separate plans with unaligned boundaries and no single strategic function vision to guide public and private sectors for spatially interconnected areas.

Current collaborative working on LDPs is not binding on local planning authorities, consistent across boundaries or in terms of stakeholder and public engagement, nor does it go through a scrutiny procedure. Following recommendations by the City Regions Task Force, City Regions were set up in 2013 in south east Wales and Swansea Bay on the “basis of existing patterns of movement and the potential for increased interconnectivity, together with the tradition of both social and economic interdependence.” The Task Force also noted the need for collaborative arrangements between the two areas to avoid “unproductive rivalry”. Furthermore, it recommended a city region strategic planning tier similar to Scotland. Carl Sargeant, as the Minister with responsibility for planning in an interview published in *The Planner* in October 2013, said that “the move aims to encourage private and public sector organisations to think beyond their geographical boundaries.” Consideration will need to be given to whether these geographically defined areas are relevant for a complete spatial planning approach for these parts of Wales.

In October 2014, the Planning (Wales) Bill was introduced to the National Assembly for Wales. The Bill includes powers for Welsh Ministers to designate strategic planning areas and for them to establish Strategic Planning Panels to prepare and keep under review a Strategic Development Plan (SDP). Three areas are provisionally identified as being the subject of SDPs; these are broadly focussed on Cardiff, Swansea and the A55 Corridor.

The Bill also includes proposals to introduce a National Development Framework (NDF) to replace the WSP

and set out the Welsh Government’s land use priorities. The SDPs will be required to conform to the NDF and in turn Local Development Plans (LDPs) will need to be in conformity with the relevant SDP.

The RTPI supports the creation of a clear planning hierarchy within Wales, identifying what plans are needed and who should prepare these. However the creation of a further tier of plans between national and local needs to be balanced against increasing the complexity of the system. With a strategic planning framework, we believe that parts of mainly rural Wales may not need the addition of another plan layer.

We endorse the need for the strategic planning level to have statutory underpinning for the best outcomes and will require accountable collaboration to produce the SDPs and ongoing work required to keep them updated.

The RTPI considers there to be a strong justification for the governance of the SDP Panels to be democratically accountable to the constituent parts of the sub-region area. We do not support the inclusion of non-elected members of the Panels, but do support the option for co-opting specialist advisors to the Panels to provide advice as required.

### The RTPI would expect SDPs to be:

**Focused:** They should be ambitious yet prioritise investment and levers that encourage investment. This includes clarity about appropriate areas for development and protection with a focus on outcomes.

**Scale:** They should reflect real communities of interest and coherent social, economic and environmental areas.

**Integrated:** They should sit within the national framework established by the NDF and bring together and reconcile the objectives of other strategies, both public and private, national and strategic, that are crucial to the delivery of development.

**Robust yet flexible:** They must be based on sound and transparent evidence that is subject to high level scrutiny and regular monitoring. There should be a clear direction and scale of change at least in the medium term, without becoming static by being over prescriptive.

**Inclusive:** They must be transparent about difficult decisions often evident at this level. SDPs should be agreed democratically following substantive input from all communities of interest including business and public utilities.

## Recommendations for Northern Ireland

The Northern Ireland Regional Development Strategy (RDS), approved in January 2012, sets out the framework for the spatial development for the Region up to 2035. The RDS is cross-cutting with linkages to other key government policies and statutory legislation; it is the spatial reflection of the programme for government and the investment programmes that it gives rise to. There must be strong buy in from all government departments and the RDS needs to be kept up to date through a process of continuous or regular review at least coinciding with the Assembly programme for government, which undergoes a fundamental review every five years (post Assembly election).

The RDS is a key document within the planning system. It sets out strategic guidance which is used in the preparation of development plans, planning policy statements and urban regeneration initiatives. The current legislative requirement is that development plans, planning policy statements and development schemes are required to be “in general conformity with” the RDS.

Northern Ireland is currently in a transition phase in the establishment of a new planning system. The system proposed for NI from April 2015 is plan-led, through a system of Local Development Plans and work is currently underway to establish a Strategic Planning Policy Statement (SPPS) to replace the current system of PPSs.

Elections took place in 2014 for 11 new councils and they will take on planning powers from April 2015 to include preparation of local development plans, determining the majority of applications and taking enforcement action. The consensus view is that it is unlikely that the new councils will prepare joint plans in the initial phase and will instead focus on their own individual Local Development Plans (LDPs).

LDPs will need to take account of the RDS and this is the main way in which matters that cross between strategic (local authority) boundaries will be handled, LDPs must meet the tests of robustness against regional policy.

The Department of the Environment (DOE) has oversight of the plan making function and can enforce authorities to co-operate at different levels - whole plans or parts of plans. In the early phases of this process, it will be important for the new Councils to develop their own plans, and not necessarily look to collaborate on joint plans. Notwithstanding this, it will be important that they consider the impact of their plans beyond their own boundaries and the impact of neighbouring plans on their own areas.

The call in mechanism functions regionally for regionally significant development proposals or proposals that affect development plans.

The Belfast Metropolitan Area Plan 2015 (BMAP) is a development plan being prepared under the provisions of Part III of the Planning (Northern Ireland) Order 1991 by the DOE. Although the BMAP has now been adopted,<sup>26</sup> it is recommended that it be replaced at the earliest opportunity by the new local authorities; plans prepared under the new system will be subject to the tests of robustness and will need to conform to the RDS. It is anticipated that any new plans prepared within the ‘BMAP’ area will provide the sternest and most interesting test of the DOE in its oversight role and of the examination in public process and so are likely to mark a new phase in the implementation of the new planning system in Northern Ireland.

<sup>26</sup> Subject to a legal challenge as at 10.10.14

## Country recommendations: Ireland

Strategic planning in Ireland is undergoing a period of significant change. Firstly, this is as a consequence of the effects of local and regional government re-organisation introduced in the Government's October 2012 *'Putting People First – Action Programme for Effective Local Government'* which was subsequently enacted in the *'Local Government Reform Act 2014'*. This resulted in the most fundamental changes in local government in the history of the State with the reduction of -Planning authorities from 114 to 31, and the 8 regional authorities and 2 regional assemblies, reconfigured to form 3 new regional assemblies. The second suite of changes will stem from the forthcoming review of the National Spatial Strategy (NSS) and the new Planning Bill.

The combination of all of these measures will facilitate opportunities to ensure that strategic planning functions are more effectively provided in the future. We believe that the following principles should be adopted in doing this.

The NSS was launched in 2002 to provide a 20 year planning framework designed to deliver more balanced social, economic and physical development between regions through providing strategic guidance for a range of Government policies and Regional Planning Guidelines (RPGs) and Development Plans/Local Area Plans (LAP).

However, based on the experience and issues of how these tiers worked together following the introduction of the RPGs to the planning system in 2004, the Planning and Development (Amendment Act) 2010 provided for a stronger statutory link between the NSS and RPGs, with there being an explicit requirement under the Act that RPGs be prepared in order to support the implementation of the NSS. Additionally, under Section 27 (1) of the Act, a Planning Authority must ensure when making a Development Plan or LAP that the plan is 'consistent' with the RPGs in force for its area. A key mechanism to ensure this was the introduction of evidence based Core Strategies, with the former requiring to be compliant with the latter.

Experience and feedback from planners in different levels of government and other planning practitioners, is that this on the whole at the local and regional levels is now deemed to be effectively working, providing the balances and checks which were not previously in place. However, the key issue which has prevailed, particularly in more recent years given the very different economic circumstances that have been experienced since the

NSS was prepared and launched, is that the strategy has become increasingly out of date. Consequently, there would appear to be a major gap in the structure and intentions for strategic planning as set out in the 2010 Act, in contrast to what has been achieved through the RPGs covering the country.

The Local Government Reform Act replaces RPGs with Regional Spatial and Economic Strategies (RSES), with the former remaining in place until the latter have been prepared and adopted. The RSES will be prepared by the 3 regional assemblies, although there may be more than one strategy in each area – this will be determined at the regional level. Given the provision for the strengthening of the statutory linkage between the RPGs (now RSES) and the explicit requirement for the latter to support the implementation of the NSS under the 2010 Act, then the timing of the delivery of the new NSS must precede that of the RSES. This is critical if the strategic planning framework of the country is to follow the objectives of the Act and ensure that the NSS does effectively lead, influence and guide the preparation of the RSES and Development Plans/LAP and their respective Core Strategies. This means that the NSS cannot shy away from making difficult decisions over spatial priorities for the greater good. It should, however, give weight to the knowledge and experience derived from the preparation of RPGs and Development Plans in respect of the function and nature of the settlement hierarchy as these generally well reflect the realism of both actual and potential. This is specifically identified as a requirement in the designation of Gateways and Hubs in any new NSS, with the need to get back to strategic planning principles.

Additionally, given their importance in national and regional strategic planning, the designation of Strategic Development Zone (SDZ) schemes requires an integrated approach reflected and responded to in the new NSS and RSES, with all levels of Government and different Government agencies involved in the preliminary selection of candidate SDZ prior to progression towards Draft Planning Scheme. This is important if the integrity and strategic objectives of SDZ are to be secured and delivered.

One of the key roles identified as being the purpose of the 2002 NSS was that of guiding Government Departments and agencies in formulating and implementing policies and public investment decisions which have a strong spatial dimension or may otherwise be affected by spatial considerations.

<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://creatingplacesscotland.org/designing-streets/process/aligning-consents>

This is embodied in the 2010 Act in respect of RSES through the process of consultation with Government departments and other public bodies.

These principles remain at the heart of integrated and effective strategic planning but are often undermined by different agencies seeking to protect and promote their autonomy, visions and objectives, with little deference given to what underpins the Government's strategic planning objectives at the national and regional levels. The NSS and RSES must influence and contribute to other Government strategies. The Government should ensure that the NSS and RSES are corporate documents that influence other key Government Departments and associated state development agencies i.e. Irish Water, Coillte, Teagasc etc. strategies, for example, the National Development Plan, infrastructure investment such as under: the National Roads and National Transport Authorities; communications, energy and natural resources; marine planning and climate change. Both need to be able to influence decisions on investment and resources to ensure that we make best use of existing built environment and infrastructure and any new development and/or infrastructure.

Strategic planning in the Republic of Ireland cannot be looked at in isolation from that in Northern Ireland. This is specifically, but not exclusively, in respect of the Border counties and the Dublin – Belfast Economic Corridor. The principles of a mutually agreed approach is set down in both jurisdictions' current spatial/strategic planning strategies but a greater commitment to these principles is required together with more clarity on mechanisms of delivery.

*Putting People First* puts a strong emphasis on accountability as the bedrock of a properly functioning system of local democracy, providing better engagement with citizens, as well as other stakeholders. In respect of the former, this is often difficult at the strategic planning level given it is perceived as distant as against plan making at the more local level. Additionally, particularly in recent years, engagement has been hampered by the lack of staffing to undertake this. How better to do this and resource it must be given weight on the Delivering People First agenda if the strong emphasis on accountability and engagement at all levels of planning is to be achieved.



Samuel Beckett Bridge, Dublin

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## Round table participants:

### London (1)

Tony Baden, Duncan Bowie (University of Westminster), Daniel Bridge (GLA), Alex Csiscek (GLA Labour Group), Sarah Elliott (AECOM), Kayvan Karimi (Space Syntax), Andrew Jones (AECOM), Meeta Kaur (KMW SK Berwyn), John Letherland (Farrells), Charlotte Morphet (CGMS), Janice Morphet (UCL), Cath Ranson (RTPI President), Marc Stringa (AECOM), Lisa Skinner (Alliance Planning), Tom Venables (AECOM)

### Bury St. Edmunds

Paul Maison (RTPI East of England), David Potter, Peter Warner, Rob Hobbs (Ipswich Borough Council), Steve Bateman, Jackie Ward, Liz Beighton (Suffolk Coastal District Council), John Young, Richard Summers (Spatial St Edmunds)

### Bristol

Janet Askew (UWE), John Baker (Peter Brett Associates), Martin Boddy (UWE), Steve Briggs (Smiths Gore), Ian Collinson (HCA ATLAS), Patrick Conroy (South Gloucestershire Council), Sean Lewis (UWE), Sarah O'Driscoll (Bristol CC), Leonora Rozee, Nick Smith (UWE)

### Liverpool

Grant Butterworth (Liverpool City Council), Mark Chadwick (Environment Agency), Gary Collins (Cheshire & Warrington LEP), Neil Cumberlidge, Fiona Fordham (Defra), Paul Grover (Arup), Alan Harding (Heseltine Institute), Julian Jackson (Cheshire East Council), Duncan McCorquodale (Cheshire West & Chester Council), Walter Menzies (Atlantic Gateway), Andrew Murray (Manchester Airport), Peter Nears (Peel Holdings), Paul Sheppard (IBI Taylor Young), John Sturzaker, Olivier Sykes & Ian Wray (University of Liverpool)

### Durham

Richard Arkell, (RTPI NE), Caroline Burden, Ian Cansfield (Cundall), Jo-Anne Garrick (Northumberland CC), Andrea King (South Tyneside Council), Stephen Litherland (Bellway Homes), John Lowther, John Mawson (Institute for Local Governance), Chris Pipe (Hartlepool BC), Lee Pugalis (Northumbria University), Alan Townsend (University of Durham), Stuart Timmiss (Durham CC), Jonathan Wallace (NLP), Katherine Whitwell (Middlesbrough Council), Neil Wilkinson, (Gateshead MBC)

### Leeds

Simon Smales (RTPI Yorkshire) Tom Bridges (Leeds City Council), Colin Blackburn (Leeds City Region) Phil Crabtree (Leeds City Council), Richard Crabtree (Homes and Communities Agency), John Craig (East Riding of Yorkshire Council), Gordon Dabinett (University of Sheffield), Bhupinder Dev (City of Bradford Council) Michael Dross (Munich Technical University), Jeff English (Metro), Neville Ford (Wakefield Council), Antony Firth Highways Agency), Andy Haigh (Consultant), Nicole Harrison (Arup), John Jarvis (John Jarvis Consulting Ltd), Peter Nears (Peel Holdings), Nathan Smith (Turley), Malcolm Tait (University of Sheffield), Kevin Thomas (Leeds Metropolitan University), Bob Wolfe (RTPI Yorkshire), Richard Wood (O'Neill Associates)

### Birmingham

John Acres (Turley Associates), Gill Bentley (University of Birmingham), John Careford (Stratford DC), Dave Carter (Birmingham CC), Jim Davies (Environment Agency), Andrew Donnelly (West Midlands Joint Committee), Sandra Ford (HCA ATLAS), Steve Forrest (RTPI Member), Ghaz Hussain (Birmingham CC), Mark Jackson (DTZ), Gerald Kells (Planning Consultant), Sue Manns (Pegasus Group), Mark Middleton (BCU/RTPI Partnership Board), Julie Morgan (Miller Homes), Alan Murie (West Midlands Futures Network), Mark Parkinson (Staffordshire CC), Stefan Preuss (National Grid), Lindsey Richards (HCA), Alister Scott (Birmingham City University), Sam Silcocks (Harris Lamb), Mike Smith (Walsall Council), Roger Stone, David Thew (West Midlands Futures Network), Paul Tomlinson (URS), Mandy Walker, Warwickshire County Council, Alan Wenban-Smith (consultant)

## Southampton

Steve Avery (New Forest NPA), Kay Brown (Southampton CC), Charlie Collins (Savills), Pete Errington (Hampshire CC), Louise Evans (New Forest DC), Ryan Johnson (Turley Associates), Phil Marshall (Hampshire CC), Adele Mayer (Havant BC), Paul Nichols, Chair (Southampton CC), Wendy Pereira (IOW Council), Vicky Piper (Portsmouth CC), Graham Tuck (Southampton CC), Tony Wright (Eastleigh BC)

## Dublin

Jerry Barnes (MDB), Aidan Culhane (DoECLG) Paraic Fallon (Dublin City Council), Berna Grist, (University College Dublin), Eamonn Kelly (RPS), Aoife Moore (Midlands Regional Authority), Conor O' Donovan (National Transport Authority) John Ring (Knight Frank), Robert Ryan (An Bord Pleanala), Marion Chalmers (RTPI Ireland)

## Wrexham

Allan Archer (RTPI Cymru), Charlotte Beattie (Wrexham County Borough Council), Jonathan Cawley (Snowdonia National Park), Nicola Corbishley (Wrexham County Borough Council), Mike Cuddy, Mark Farrar, Mark Harris (Bridgend County Borough Council), Matthew Price (Cardiff City Council), Karen Potter (University of Liverpool), Ian Stevens (Conwy County Borough Council), Clare Taylor (MWH Global), Jan Tyrer, Owain Wyn

## London (2)

Jonathan Manns (Colliers), Adrian Brown (Berkeley Strategic), Nick Baker (Legal and General), Pippa Aitken (Colliers), Catriona Riddell, Iain McSween (Commerical Estates), Jon Kenny (Commerical Estates), Mark Gilpin (Inland Homes), Ken Hopkins (Mactaggart and Mickel), Tony Aitken (Colliers), Mark Sitch (Barton Willmore), Matthew Spry (NLP), Sue Janota (Surrey CC), Joseph Pearson (Mid Sussex DC), Jerry Unsworth (District Councils' Network), Sarah Ball (Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead)

## Edinburgh

Robin Holder (Holder Planning), David Jennings (Aberdeen City & Shire SDPA), Bill Lindsay (Fife Council, representing HoPS), John McCarthy (Heriot Watt University), Ewan MacLeod (Shepherd & Wedderburn), Blair Melville (Homes for Scotland), Kevin Murray (Kevin Murray Associates), Graeme Purves, Stuart Tait (Glasgow & Clyde Valley SDPA), Carrie Thomson (Scottish Government), David Anderson (Transport Scotland), Cliff Hague (Built Environment Forum Scotland)

## RTPI South East and University of Reading

held a "Planning Question Time" evening in March 2014 at which a panel discussed the issue of strategic planning with particular reference to South East England.

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**RTPI**

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**RTPI - Royal Town Planning Institute**

[policy@rtpi.org.uk](mailto:policy@rtpi.org.uk)

Tel: 020 7929 9494

Royal Town Planning Institute, 41 Botolph Lane, London EC3R 8DL.

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