Ambitions for the North

A spatial framework for people and places in the North of England

RTPI Research Paper
May 2019
## Contents

4 Executive Summary
8 An Introduction to the North of England
12 Now is the time to change the narrative
14 The Great North Plan: People and Place
18 Identifying Northern Priorities
25 Ambitions for the North
26 Ambition 1
29 Ambition 2
31 Ambition 3
Executive Summary

There is a well-documented need to narrow the economic performance gap between the North and the South of England. In order to fulfil a transformational economic future for the North, the debate has focused on making key improvements to the skills base, innovation performance, transport and digital connectivity, and agglomeration.

Over the past few years, however, there has been growing recognition that:
- Improving the fortunes of the North of England is not just about narrowing the disparity between the North and the South, or delivering improved transport connectivity and transformational economic growth. There are inequalities across the North that arise from a complex history of post-industrial decline and decades of under-investment in transport and other infrastructure;
- There are range of wider challenges relating to people and place need addressing, including climate and demographic change, making the North more attractive to graduates and young families, tackling the decline of our high streets and ‘left-behind towns’, and focus on the quality of jobs, as well as the need to create additional jobs;
- Place-based planning is key to delivering the economic, environmental and social benefits that should arise from transformational infrastructure investment. This requires planning positively for the housing and employment growth that can be supported, a commitment to sustainable patterns of growth, and placing the needs of existing and new communities at the heart of planning for the future; and
- Various barriers currently prevent planning from playing this full role, including the absence of a strategic vision for the North, unfinished devolution arrangements, fragmented governance structures, and an excessive focus on the delivery of housing numbers coupled with a lack of planning and funding for the infrastructure needed to create successful places.

This Spatial Framework – which covers the period to 2050 – identifies what needs to be done to overcome the barriers and enable planning to play a wider role in delivering a better future for the people and places of the North. The overarching principles that underpin the Framework are:
- Spatial planning should be aligned with strategic investment in infrastructure and economic development to deliver sustainable communities and create long-lasting, positive outcomes for people, the environment and the economy;
- The planning system should create the conditions in which we can create better, more attractive places for people to live and work and for communities to prosper – economically, socially and environmentally; and
- The planning system should support and enhance the North’s cultural identity, protect and enhance its environment, and increase its ability to confidently adapt to change.

The Framework is non-statutory, and has been prepared in consultation with a wide range of Northern stakeholders. It is designed to work at a pan-Northern level – across the North East, the North West and Yorkshire & the Humber – rather than for a particular local context. The Framework should guide future planning in the North in a way that puts people and place at the heart of the ambition for the North, not just houses and jobs, infrastructure and growth.

The Framework sets a strategic direction for spatial planning in the North to 2050. It does this by proposing a series of ‘Ambitions’, together with supporting ‘Recommendations’ that underpin delivery. The Framework establishes a path for future spatial planning within major metropolitan centres, larger urban settlements, and rural and coastal areas. The ambitions and recommendations are designed to work across – and support co-operation between – these different types of place.

Achieving the North’s potential
Building on its strengths and addressing its challenges

The North has many opportunities for transformational economic growth

The North achieves £345bn GVA, and is the UK’s largest manufacturing region. If it were a country, it would be Europe’s 9th largest economy ahead of Norway and Austria.

The North is home to 5 of the UK’s 8 core cities, as well as 4 National Parks and 6 Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty full of inspiring landscapes, cultural and industrial heritage.

Plans are advancing for major rail investment, providing substantial opportunity for economic growth and new housing.

Devolution of governance and funding has begun, fostering an ambitious and collaborative approach to forward planning, with the Great North Plan as one illustration of this entrepreneurial Northern spirit.

But to deliver sustainable, fair and equitable growth, there is a need to address the following challenges...

Complex post-industrial decline leading to significant inequalities and poverty across the North
High demand for affordable housing associated with changing demographics, including an ageing population
Technological and behavioural transformation affecting employment, housing, shopping, leisure, education, health, logistics, mobility and more
High availability of brownfield land for development and regeneration, but high cost, low value outcomes affecting ability to deliver

High street decline, falling investment and increasing vacancies that require restructuring and repurposing of town centres
Climate change, poor urban air quality and pressure on the rural economy and landscapes, including declining biodiversity
Fragmented governance leading to barriers to co-ordination of investment, infrastructure, spatial planning and community outcomes
Process-driven planning which follows quantitative targets, rather than focussing on creating places that people want to live and work in
Ambitions for the North

**Ambitions**

1. To become a globally competitive, sustainable and attractive North, underpinned by a vision which aligns strategic opportunities for housing, economic development and environmental enhancement with investment and infrastructure proposals.

A compelling northern spatial vision built around high quality rail connections and next generation generation.

A transformational vision for delivering housing in the right places, at the right scale, quality and affordability, providing an alternative to the standard methodology which is more aligned with the transformational growth agenda in the North.

A strategic sub-national plan for Industry and Logistics, to take advantage of new rail capacity for intermodal freight and the industrial economy, ensuring co-ordination with global markets and trade routes.

A strategic infrastructure tool to support vision-critical infrastructure which enables station related development and growth.

2. To deliver this transformational vision by coordinating planning and investment across functional areas, covering housing, employment, infrastructure, technology, environment and community.

A plan to deliver place-based spatial strategies for all functional areas in the North, based on collaborative strategic planning across sub-regional areas.

Local Connectivity Plans to ensure the delivery of important connections from strategic transport infrastructure to growth opportunities and local communities.

A northern model for opportunity areas to encourage development around station hubs by delivering simplified planning, land acquisition powers and investment incentives for growth.

A northern spatial planning observatory, providing an open source platform for spatial planning data, innovation and collaboration, potentially based on a hub and spoke model covering each of the functional areas.

3. To narrow the disparities within the North, provide better and more co-ordinated planning for rural and coastal communities, to create well connected, high quality, sustainable places which are attractive to live, work and visit, and capable of competing in a fast changing world.

Creation of an informal ‘place network’ for northern rural and coastal authorities to promote good practice and innovation, to properly tackle ‘left behind’ places, and to address the decline in skills and resources across Local Planning Authorities.

Development of co-ordinated Local Transport, Public Health and Green Infrastructure Plans linking planning for sustainable development across the built and natural environment, and providing the basis for the strategic case for funding applications.

Development of alternative models for collaborative brownfields/ greenfield planning to stimulate urban regeneration and boost the delivery of affordable homes in and around rural and coastal settlements.

Spatial Plans for National Parks and AONBs to capitalise on and improve the extra-ordinary natural assets of the North, and to support transformation and sustainable economic growth.

**Leaders & Enablers**

Leadership from Convention of the North and Transport for the North, working with:

- Treasury, BEIS, DIT & MHCLG
- National Infrastructure Commission
- Metro Mayors, Combined Authorities & County Councils
- NP11 & Northern Powerhouse Partnership
- Environment Agency
- National Park Authorities and AONBs
- Homes for the North
- Utility & Infrastructure Providers
- Great North Plan steering group
- Local communities

**Recommendations**

- Establish a dedicated working group to spearhead the work of the ‘place-based’ network of rural and coastal local authorities, and to work with the northern spatial planning observatory to establish and use the best available data and techniques as the basis for local planning, such as:
  - Best practice techniques for the development of place-based local planning;
  - Longitudinal data to support the revitalisation of the North’s left behind towns, town centres and high streets;
  - Smart mobility solutions that might support local sustainable models for housing and growth, and;
  - Develop collaborative skills and resources plans to better deal with the challenges of local planning and delivery:
  - Assessing the use of technology in planning to support hard pressed planning teams within local authorities; and
  - Creation of a dedicated resource to support the bidding for, and delivery of local infrastructure programmes to meet specific local challenges.

**Considerations**

The process should involve a partnership of local leaders. A dedicated working group or joint planning committee comprising chief planning officers and others should be established to develop a collaborative vision, through wide-ranging public consultation and engagement.

This process should also recognise the radical changes to the economic geography of the North arising from investment in rail infrastructure (in particular), technological development in the sector and the potential for co-locating housing and economic growth close to transport hubs, whilst balancing this against the North’s special environment and its differentiating characteristics as a great place to live.

There is currently no single body with spatial planning and economic powers – a governance gap that urgently needs to be filled. In the meantime, existing groupings will need to take these proposals forward.

Leadership from the Convention of the North, Metro Mayors, Combined Authorities, County Councils and the NP11, working with:

- Treasury, MHCLG, Cities & Local Growth Unit
- TfN and Local Authorities
- Utility and Infrastructure Providers
- Transport for the North
- Local communities
- Northern Universities, including the NB
An introduction to the North of England

Where vibrant towns, cities and cultures meet magnificent landscapes to create a competitive and sustainable North

This ‘People & Place Spatial Framework’ covers the North of England (‘the North’): a substantial part of the country spanning the former government regions of the North East, the North West and Yorkshire & the Humber. This differs from the Government’s definition of the ‘Northern Powerhouse’, which also includes north Wales. In headline terms, the North of England:

- is home to over a quarter of England’s population (15 million people);
- contains over a quarter of England’s workforce (7.2 million people);
- is the UK’s largest manufacturing region;
- achieves £343 billion annual Gross Value Added, a fifth of the UK total, which would make it Europe’s 9th largest economy (ahead of Norway and Austria) were it a country;
- contains five of the eight English ‘core cities’, and four of the ten English National Parks; and
- contains many of the country’s most affordable cities in terms of median house prices.

The North is, therefore, an extremely important and valuable part of the UK in terms of overall economic performance, the size of its resident population and the rich diversity of its environment, culture and places. Despite a historic legacy of under-investment, the North comes from a position of strength, with considerable assets and huge potential.

The scale of the opportunity for the North is substantial and considerable growth is proposed

There is widespread recognition that enhanced, inclusive and sustainable economic growth is fundamental to improving the prospects for the North. In headline terms, the growth that is already planned/proposed, or which needs to be planned for, is as follows:

- Many additional jobs (and improved productivity) are predicted to be needed by 2050 under a transformational economic future for the North (as initial estimate of 850,000 more jobs than under the ‘business as usual’ scenario is currently under review);
- Substantial improvements to the skills base, innovation performance and transport and digital connectivity will be needed;
- Growth in the knowledge-based sectors is expected to lead to increases in the number of high-skilled workers employed in urban areas in general and city centres in particular, but there will also be a need for substantial development in out-of-centre locations for advanced manufacturing and logistics facilities, where good access to and connectivity between road, rail and other transport modes is essential;
- Job availability and quality is a key driver of housing demand. Anticipated change under the transformational economic growth agenda will trigger a significant need for conveniently located, good quality and affordable housing to accommodate the anticipated growth in the workforce. Estimates suggest that more than 50,000 additional homes will be needed each year across the North compared with 44,000 under the ‘business as usual’ scenario;
- Demographic shifts mean that younger generations are seeking to live in more urban locations and thus urban liveability, diversification of housing, quality of place, place-making and re-use of brownfield land are increasingly important issues. The North has a large number of towns and cities with high-quality historic centres which can be positively re-imagined and adapted to cater for this growing trend; and
- Retaining graduates from northern universities is a significant opportunity for the northern economy and should be a high priority. This highlights the need for the right jobs in the right places, supported by good-quality and affordable housing, as well as other key infrastructure.

### The North

A population and economy larger than the devolved nations combined, but with less autonomy over budgets and decision making

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scotland</th>
<th>Population</th>
<th>GVA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5.4m</td>
<td>£138bn</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Northern Ireland</th>
<th>Population</th>
<th>GVA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1.8m</td>
<td>£40bn</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Wales</th>
<th>Population</th>
<th>GVA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3.1m</td>
<td>£62bn</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>North of England</th>
<th>Population</th>
<th>GVA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>15.4m</td>
<td>£343bn</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Ambitions for the North

- Advanced manufacturing (advanced materials, nanotechnologies and processes); energy (generation, storage and low-carbon technologies/ processes); health innovation (life sciences, medical technologies, a health and devolution of health and social care); digital (computing, software, data analytic, smart products, simulation) – supported by improved financial and professional services, logistics (including main port and airport developments) and education (in particular, higher education, to provide the research and knowledge excellence).

### Sources

The evolving devolution of leadership and decision-making is critical to delivering success

Strategic leadership and direction is a critical factor in attracting investment and making the right locations viable for development, while delivering positive social and environmental impacts for communities.

Devolution is gathering momentum in the North, particularly in the North West where the devolution of strategic planning powers has led to the publication of a draft Greater Manchester Spatial Framework (‘GMSF’). The emerging GMSF is being produced collaboratively between the 10 local authorities across Greater Manchester, thereby enabling key topics to be planned for over the long term at a sub-regional scale, including:

- Setting an overall vision as to how Greater Manchester should develop over the next two decades;
- Identifying the amount of new development that will come forward across Greater Manchester and for each of the 10 districts, in terms of housing, offices, and industry and warehousing, and the main areas in which this will be focused;
- Supporting the delivery of key infrastructure, such as transport and utilities;
- Seeking to protecting the important environmental assets across the city region;
- Allocating sites for employment and housing outside of the existing urban areas; and
- Defining a new Green Belt boundary for Greater Manchester that reflects strategic changes to economic geography.

However, governance arrangements across the North are complex, with multiple bodies fulfilling different roles

These include:

- Numerous central government departments and agencies, such as the Department for Transport (DT), Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG), the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) and the Environment Agency, along with the Government’s Northern Powerhouse team;
- Transport for the North: a statutory sub-national transport body, established in April 2018, with a remit to bring the North’s 20 local transport authorities and business leaders together with Network Rail, Highways England and High Speed 2 Ltd, and work with central government;
- NP11: the chairs of the 11 Northern Local Enterprise Partnerships, which came together in 2018 to form a government-funded board and represent each of their regions within a modern day ‘Council for the North’;
- Combined authorities: legal partnerships between two or more councils which collaborate and take collective decisions on certain cross-boundary issues. Combined authorities are currently in place across Greater Manchester, Liverpool City Region, Sheffield City Region, Tees Valley, and the North of Tyne;
- National Park Authorities, which cut across local authority areas and have planning powers, and cover the Lake District, Northumberland, North York Moors, and Yorkshire Dales; and
- Local Planning Authorities: 70+ district and county councils with jurisdiction for their administrative areas.

As well as the official organisations listed above, there are various influencing bodies/groups, including:

- Northern Powerhouse Partnership: a body launched in September 2016 to help develop consensus among businesses, civic leaders and others about how the north of England can be more successful;
- Homes for the North (HfN): a consortium of 18 of the largest housing associations in the North, launched in Parliament in 2016 to influence housing policy;
- The People’s Powerhouse – a movement which seeks to ensure that people and communities are at the heart of plans for the north of England;
- Think tanks such as the Institute of Public Policy Research North (IPPR North) which was launched in 2005 as the leading progressive think tank dedicated to the North of England, based in Newcastle and Manchester; and
- The Great North Plan steering group, which is chaired by IPPR North and comprises representatives from local and central government, universities, the RITP, and various public and private sector organisations.

Progress is being made, but...

The desire to collaborate at a pan-Northern level has created a rich and diverse network of formal and informal institutions, which has made some excellent progress. However, there remains a lack of co-ordination when it comes to the direction and nature of spatial planning for growth. The major metropolitan areas benefit from co-ordination via their combined authorities but, even here, governance arrangements and strategic leadership remains patchy. This inhibits the effective planning for land use, infrastructure and investment, negatively impacts on delivery, and makes it harder for the North to address serious social and environmental issues related to public health, poverty, decarbonisation and environmental degradation.
Now is the time to change the narrative

We are at a key moment in time...

Economic growth and productivity

Alignment between infrastructure investment and opportunities for economic growth

Getting ahead of technological development and environmental change

Putting people and place at the heart of planning for growth

Possible alternative pathways for growth in the North

Alignment between infrastructure investment and environmental change

Falling behind technological development and environmental change

Declining quality of place and quality of life

Fig 5: Transformational rail investment is planned for the North, if achieved, will help to create significant changes in economic geography.

Emerging vision for the network
### The Great North Plan: People and Place

#### The Great North Plan

A series of roundtable discussions were held in northern cities during 2015, followed by the first Northern Summit in January 2016 with further plenary debates and interactive voting. The overwhelming response (60 per cent) to the question ‘Do we need a Great North Plan?’ was ‘yes’.

‘A competitive North in the national & global economy’ was chosen as the preferred vision statement by 47 per cent of respondents at the events, ahead of the statement ‘Maximising opportunities for people of all ages across the North’ (28 per cent). Some 66 per cent of respondents thought that a plan for the North of England ‘must recognise the importance of the big cities but also the vital hinterlands that serve them’.

It is clear that there was strong support for the North to compete economically, through an inclusive approach covering people of all ages and in all parts of the North, both urban and rural. The resultant Blueprint for the Great North Plan set out a series of principles to guide how the Plan should be developed; identified the documents that might together form the Plan; and outlined the process for producing the Great North Plan.

The Blueprint identified the need for the Great North Plan to be supported by a Prospectus for the North (serving as an investment plan for national and international investors) and a Governance and Delivery Plan (to oversee the development and implementation of the overall Plan). The diagrams below show how the various parts of the Great North Plan come together, along with details of project governance.

#### Key principles and objectives set at the outset for the Great North Plan are for it to be:

- High level and strategic;
- Ambitious and transformational;
- Long-term in its outlook (to 2050) but also supported by ambitions and actions that can be achieved in the short – and medium-term periods;
- Evolutionary and collaborative, acting as a reference point for all; and
- Inclusive and pan-Northern – speaking for all places across the North.

#### Blueprint for a Great North Plan

**The Great North Plan steering group**

*Published June 2016*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Great North Plan workstreams</th>
<th>Economic Strategy</th>
<th>Natural Assets Strategy</th>
<th>Transport Strategy</th>
<th>People and Place Strategy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Owned by</strong></td>
<td>Transport for the North</td>
<td>IPPR North, Natural England &amp; Environment Agency</td>
<td>Transport for the North</td>
<td>RTPI</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Overseen by</strong></td>
<td>TIN partnership board</td>
<td>Great North Plan Steering Group*</td>
<td>TIN partnership board</td>
<td>People and Place Project Group**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Developed by</strong></td>
<td>SQW</td>
<td>IPPR North, Natural England &amp; Environment Agency</td>
<td>Transport for the North</td>
<td>PBA and Newcastle University</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Next steps</strong></td>
<td>Review of NPIER underway by Better Economic Development and Cambridge Econometrics</td>
<td>Northern Natural Assets Strategy under development</td>
<td>Discussions with DfT, Network Rail, Highways England about funding and programme</td>
<td>Stakeholder Engagement</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*GNP steering group members
  - IPPR North (Chair)
  - Department for Transport
  - Department for International Trade
  - Cities and Local Growth Unit
  - Environment Agency
  - Transport for the North
  - Northern Powerhouse Partnership
  - Humber LEP
  - Homes for the North
  - Great Places Housing Group
  - Peak District National Park
  - RSA
  - Manchester University
  - Atkins
  - KPMG/ICE
  - Peel Group
  - RTPI

**People and Place project group members
  - RTPI Yorkshire (Chair)
  - IPPR North West
  - IPPR North East
  - RTPI Young Planners
  - RTPI Policy Practice and Research Committee
  - Northern planning schools
  - IPPR North
  - Independent planning consultants

---

Fig 6: Blueprint for the Great North Plan (https://www.ippr.org/files/publications/...p/pdf/blueprint-for-a-great-north-plan)
The Spatial Framework for People and Place

It is inevitable that a framework for ‘People and Place’ will straddle a multitude of overlapping themes, including transport, connectivity, energy, natural assets, housing, town centres and place-making. This presents a significant opportunity for planning to play a part as the glue which makes ambitions a reality.

However, this framework is non-statutory and so it challenges plan-makers and other bodies to grasp the huge opportunities referenced in the Framework and deliver truly transformational growth through collaboration.

Some of the overlapping areas referenced here are addressed by other strands of the Great North Plan and so whilst we refer to them in this Framework, we stop short of making recommendations that are better dealt with in other parts of the Plan. For ease of reference some headlines from the key documents are as follows:

- **Northern Powerhouse Rail** is the centrepiece programme of the Strategic Transport Plan. The stated purpose of NPR is to deliver a transformed rail network in the north of England and bring new opportunities to millions of people and businesses. The STP seeks to rebalance decades of underinvestment, with up to £70 billion of investment by 2050 contributing towards an additional £100 billion in economic growth.

- **The Northern Energy Strategy** highlights the North’s strategic advantages in key areas such as hydrogen, tidal and marine energy, as well as emerging forms of energy storage. The NES sets a vision that the north of England will be the leading low-carbon energy region in the UK by 2050, with an energy economy worth £15 billion per annum and 100,000 green jobs providing affordable, clean energy for people and businesses across the North.

- **The Northern Powerhouse Independent Economic Review** identified a need for key improvements to the skills base, innovation performance, transport connectivity and agglomeration. Four ‘prime’ capabilities for the North were identified, along with three ‘enabling’ capabilities to support the prime capabilities. The IER envisaged that the Capabilities will combine to create a distinctive and coherent offer for the North. The North’s ‘Quality of Life’ was identified as a critical underpinning asset supporting its economic capabilities, particularly in providing lower-cost housing compared to London and the South East, varied sporting and cultural offers, and easy access to the coast and countryside. The specific figures in the IER relating to growth in jobs/productivity and so on are currently being reviewed but it is clear that substantial improvements are anticipated.

- **Natural Assets North** is a new project led by IPPR North (funded by Hull City Council, Natural England, The Environment Agency, United Utilities and Yorkshire Water) which explores the natural potential of the north of England, including the quality of its landscape, water and coastlines. The natural capital of the North is immense, but its full potential is not yet being realised. The first output from the work was a briefing (December 2018) on the importance of the North’s uplands.

### A more joined up approach to driving sustainable, fair and inclusive growth is needed.

Given the absence of an overseeing body charged with leading change in the North, it is essential that a way is found for planning in the north of England to take place in a more co-ordinated and effective way, thus supporting the objectives of good growth which facilitates healthy, safe and prosperous lives for the people who live there.

Much more joined-up thinking and strategic place-based spatial planning is needed than under the existing system whereby the statutory development plan-makers are tasked with creating single plans for their own areas under a numbers-driven system, or where the myriad of other bodies with relatively narrow remits progress their own plans without a common spatial planning vision.

The production of the People and Place Spatial Framework has involved collaboration across a wide range of statutory and non-statutory organisations, which enabled various drivers of change to be identified and explored.

The process we followed involved the following strands:
- review of key evidence documents and initiatives produced over recent years;
- our own research;
- identification of key drivers of change and common themes, which we tested through stakeholder workshops held at six locations across the North;
- overarching strategic aims were also explored through the stakeholder workshops;
- the discussions at the stakeholder workshops were structured around the broad ‘themes’ based around the ‘keys drivers of change’ ensuring that key topics were explored in sufficient depth; and
- a call for evidence.

‘Aims’ and ‘Recommendations’ for people and place emerged from the process outlined above, which were tested and refined through follow-up meetings with a broad spread of stakeholders as well as the People & Place Project Group and the Great North Plan Steering Group.

### Key issues for the People and Place Spatial Framework

- Essentially a framework for spatial planning, (non-statutory & non-plan);
- Covers the whole of ‘the North’ (the regions of Yorkshire & the Humber, North-West and North-East);
- Centre on the spatial implications of ‘People’ & ‘Place’;
- Needs to consider factors such as predicted demographic, social, cultural and technological change… and their consequential impacts;
- Long-term and ‘pan-northern’ focus;
- Fosters co-operation and collaboration across the North; and
- Influence the way we plan for the future, so that we create the best possible places for future generations to live and work.

---

**Case Study**

**The Northern Powerhouse Independent Economic Review**

**June 2016**

The Northern Powerhouse Independent Economic Review identifies four prime capabilities:

- **Advanced Manufacturing** with a particular emphasis on materials and process
- **Energy**, in particular expertise around generation, storage and low carbon technologies, especially nuclear and offshore
- **Health Innovation**, with a focus on Life Sciences, Medical Technologies/ Devices, e-health and emerging new models of service provision
- **Digital** focusing particularly on computation, software tools/ design and content, data analytics and simulation modelling, and wider media strengths

These four prime capabilities are supported by three enabling capabilities, which play a crucial role in supporting growth and development

- **Financial and Professional services**
- **Logistics**
- **Education (primarily Higher Education)**
4 Identifying Northern Ambitions

Ambitions for the North were developed through an iterative process of research and engagement. There were three components of this process:

- Key Drivers of Change;
- Common Themes; and
- Strategic Aims

Initial research aimed to establish the key factors that should be addressed through a spatial framework, and identify how these relate to key issues or concerns for the North.

Stakeholder workshops discussed these key drivers of change and common themes in more detail, and explored the potential strategic aims that would define the nature of ambitions and recommendations relevant to the progress in each area.

Key Drivers of Change

Key drivers of change emerged through the initial research stage of the project, and evolved through discussion with stakeholders. For simplicity, the drivers of change that broadly relate to ‘People’ are grouped under the headings ‘Demographics’, ‘Employment’ and ‘Housing’ and those that more broadly relate to ‘Place’ are grouped under the themes of ‘Towns’, ‘Natural Assets’ and ‘Housing’.

The themes inevitably overlap and interact with each other, but presenting the drivers of change in this way is useful given the extensive and complex geographical area that comprises the North.

Drivers of change: People

Demographic change

- The North grows more slowly than the South – projected population change is 50% of the England average. Migration is a significant component of population growth in the South, much less so in the North. This has a significant implication on the potential for growth;
- The population in the North is predicted to grow, but in rural areas, population is predicted either not to grow, or to lose population over the next two decades. Attracting young people and families to rural areas is important in maintaining the rural economy;
- The UK population is ageing. The North generally ages in line with the England average, but parts of the North – largely the rural areas and the ‘far North’ – age more quickly. Spatial planning has an important role to play to provide for this changing demographic;
- The North does well at attracting students to study, but fails to keep them – they drift back south post-graduation (the North West has begun to buck this trend). Retaining students should be a priority.

Drivers of change: Place

Creating demographic change

- Enhancing rural and coastal communities;
- Securing the future of towns centres;
- Harnessing northern assets

Responding to demographic change

- Creating employment and jobs;
- Delivering quality and affordable housing


cross-cutting themes

- Connectivity and infrastructure;
- Quality of life, health and wellbeing;
- Quality of built and natural places;
- Environment and climate change;
- Prosperity and inequality;
- Digital impacts on jobs and travel

Key Drivers of Change are discussed with reference to diagrams and graphics on pages 19 – 22.

Fig 7: Projected Population Change (2016 based)

Fig 8: Old Age Dependency Ratios – the North & England

Fig 9: Migration Flows between Regions (2017)

Fig 10: GVA per capita

Fig 11: Median wages by region (2018)

Key Drivers of Change and common themes are discussed with reference to diagrams and graphs on pages 19 – 22.

Fig 7 – 14 and 16 – 18 are sourced from Office for National Statistics Licence under the Open Government Licence v2.0. Adapted from data from the Office for National Statistics Licence under the Open Government Licence v2.0.

Fig 7 – 10, 12 – 14 and 16 – 18 contain Ordinance Survey data © Crown Copyright and database right 2018. Government Licence v3.0.
Demographic shifts are increasing the tendency to move to urban locations. While the North has high proportions of highly educated population (24%), it is lower than the England average (27%). Conversely, the proportion of people with no qualifications is higher. The urban/rural divide, with a halo around the urban areas, underpins the pattern across the North. The North needs to bolster the role of universities as centres of learning in attracting a skilled workforce to the North – essential to fulfill the Northern Powerhouse economic growth strategy around prime and enabling capabilities.

Not enough housing is being planned for in the North under the Standard Methodology,1 which is out of step with the transformational economic agenda. This could lead to profound social and economic consequences if left unchecked.

The North is a very affordable place to live – regarded as a key strength. However, young people don’t have sufficient options for living in rural areas. More new homes are needed, in locations where people want to live and at a price that residents can afford.

Urban liveability, diversification of housing, quality of place, place-making and re-use of brownfield land are increasingly important drivers of change. The North has a large number of towns and cities with high quality historic centres which can be adapted to cater for this growing trend, with the potential for declining centres to be re-imagined;

However, social infrastructure is often poor in the North’s secondary towns with limited investment – adding to a perception that these are declining/run down. Investment in place making should be a key part of future plans;

Land values are generally lower in the North, and the cost of regenerating difficult urban sites identified for housing is high, making viability a real barrier to delivering new homes away from higher value locations. A more strategic approach to the location of new housing is required. This needs to move away from a ‘five-year supply’ numbers exercise to integrated planning for housing, economic development and infrastructure.

Below is a summary of what delegates at the stakeholder workshops saw as the main drivers of change relating to places that need to be addressed by planning:

- Retail expenditure continues to grow, but the share of ‘special forms of trading’ (mainly online shopping) has been growing more quickly, and the role of the high street continues to decline;
- Vacancy rates are relatively high compared to the rest of the UK, with the North West and North East having the highest persistent vacancy rates over 3 year period;
- Town centres need to be places to meet and to do business – quality of place is critical. Retailers are investing in a smaller number of higher order centres, and it is likely that this will disproportionately affect the North. More radical approaches are needed to repurpose our town centres;
- Demographic shifts are increasing the tendency for more urban living and commuting by public transport. This presents opportunities for certain centres, but not all centres will benefit that way. Bespoke/creative ideas will be needed. Not all reinvention means residential.

The North grows more slowly than other parts of the country, and this is more apparent in coastal and rural areas. Also, rural and coastal communities age more quickly than elsewhere, probably because younger people migrate to urban areas;

Many coastal and rural towns are experiencing continuing decline following loss of industry/ employment/ investment. Conversely, some rural and coastal areas do well – possibly related to power stations or single industries, or because of particular tourism factors;

The withdrawal of national and international investment needs to be replaced, and finding a (multi-industry) role for the local community’s entrepreneuriulism will be key. A local vision for places, taking account of the economic context of the area – will be critical to establish buy-in to change and adaptation;

Many rural and coastal communities fall outside of the major metropolitan areas and Combined Authorities where there is a strategic layer of planning to provide direction. Devising a way of developing collaborative local visions to guide the reinvention of rural and coastal communities should be a key priority.

1 The Standard Methodology for assessing local housing need.

Natural assets

- Natural assets are central to quality of place for the North of England. They differentiate the North, underpinning its attractiveness as a place to live, and its competitiveness as a place to invest;
- They generate significant social, economic & environmental value, through carbon storage, water supply, flood risk management, biodiversity, and supporting health & wellbeing. They also generate significant economic value through tourism, minerals, energy generation, agriculture, forestry, eco-system services, and ports & logistics uses;
- Government’s 25 year plan to improve the environment represents a major opportunity for the North’s natural assets to play a more integrated and essential role. There is scope for the North’s natural environment to provide natural capital and biodiversity gain services, as well as providing the natural spaces that are important components of a good quality of life;
- Despite the importance of these assets, the planning and governance of natural assets is disassociated from planning for people. The assets are not engaged in devolved administrations and decision-making. The integrated planning of our natural and built environments is needed to get the best of the interdependencies between the two;
- It is felt that the North’s natural assets deserve a seat at the decision-making table: a place-based approach and a collaborative approach to action, and co-ordinated investment and aligned incentives.

These themes are relevant to all the drivers of change, and are important in informing the outcomes and requirements we might be looking for from the Ambitions for the North.

Quality of life outcomes

Environmental: the urgent need to respond to climate change/ carbon reduction, cutting across planning for development, regeneration of our towns and cities, and the role of our natural assets.

Health & Wellbeing: the emerging understanding of the impact of a car based, low activity society on health and wellbeing and the benefit of good design, public realm, green spaces.

Prosperity: the decline of our town centres and high streets, the barriers of low accessibility to training and employment opportunities, and the opportunities of creating the conditions for new emerging business models through more flexible standards for the built environment.

Quality of place requirements

Connectivity to local facilities, education and health: connectivity can be provided through good transport connections, but how this is done may vary over time. We need to allow some flexibility in approach, and focus on delivering good local connections for active modes, allowing smart mobility solutions to emerge and make efficient use of existing infrastructure as much as possible.

Digital connectivity will be essential for rural and coastal towns, and rural communities – whilst the trends towards urbanisation appear irresistible now, there is an opportunity for less well-connected settlements to develop a prosperous future through digitally enabled employment and cutting-edge local businesses.

Quality of the built and natural environment is at the heart of creating attractive places which people want to live and work in. It is widely recognised that current business case methodologies make it difficult to justify investment in pure economic terms, and so the strategic case is fundamental to success. A local vision is therefore a critical requirement.

Two further common themes arose through stakeholder engagement...

Firstly, there is an increasing recognition that the planning process is failing to deliver sustainable, healthy and prosperous communities. Research from a range of organisations, including Public Health England and the Foundation for Integrated Transport is pointing towards car-based development leading to poor health and wellbeing, environmental and economic outcomes. There is strong support for a move towards a more place-based approach to planning, based around a clear vision for future communities and an adaptive approach to delivery. This was seen by stakeholders as being an important aspect of future planning in the North, putting the future needs of communities at the heart of the process, and equipping them to adapt to future change.

Secondly, the significant reduction in available skills and resources in Local Planning Authorities (in particular), with the brief and empowerment to engage in these wider issues. Whist direct funding levels is not the whole story, there is a consistent picture of skills and resources being a major impediment to putting in place the necessary frameworks for good growth.

CREATE: Urban Mobility: Preparing for the Future, Learning from the Past

CREATE is an EU Horizon 202 and Civitas project which looks at past transport and land use planning policy development across a range of European Cities. It identifies a common trend from ‘car based’ cities, through ‘sustainable mobility cities’ to ‘place based’ cities.

It also looks forward to the development of ‘Integrated Cities’ which respond to ‘smart city’ principles, seek to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of its networks, and adopts a comprehensive systems approach to urban planning.

The study advocates comprehensive ‘place based’ city visions to guide, and governance to lead the development of liveable places, which are safe and attractive places to live, where people can take part in economic, social and community activities.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Local authority spend on planning (minus income from planning fees)*</th>
<th>2009/10</th>
<th>2017/18</th>
<th>% difference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yorkshire and Humberside Total Planning Cuts (NET)</td>
<td>– 60%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North East Total Planning Cuts (NET)</td>
<td>– 66%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North West Total Planning Cuts (NET)</td>
<td>– 62%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A key underpinning element of the Great North Plan is an underpinning vision for the North. At this stage of the work, this has not been fully defined, but there were some very interesting and informative messages that came through the stakeholder engagement about the nature and tone of the vision that should inform the Spatial Framework, and the ambitions and recommendations it contains.

Stakeholders urged us to break away from previous trends rather than perpetuate them and, in particular, to move away from three prevailing northern narratives:

- **Away from what the challenges are, towards how we build on the North’s considerable strengths.**
- **Away from a focus on things outside of the North’s control – such as the North/South divide – and to focus more on addressing inequalities across the North and improving competitiveness and quality of place.**
- **Away from a focus only on Core Cities and major metropolitan areas, towards a more inclusive, collaborative approach to metropolitan, suburban, rural and coastal towns and deep rural communities.**

The strategic aims proposed therefore reflect a positive and forward-looking vision of the future for the North of England, in which spatial planning:

- Responds to major infrastructure investment aimed at improving the North’s competitiveness (for skills, investment, productivity and jobs), and reducing intra-regional inequality.
- Supports investment in sustainable transformation, creating new communities focussed around access to the rail network and other sustainable transport modes, protecting capacity on the road network, and enabling investment in creating better places.
- Supports co-operation across boundaries and organisations, to make the most of inter-dependencies and to support the development of tailor-made solutions to the delivery of good growth.
- Provides a planning framework for the delivery of better places, which in turn can provide the foundations on which healthier, more sustainable, more prosperous communities can be built.

There are three distinct types of places across the North of England and the ‘Ambitions’ and supporting ‘Recommendations’ on the following pages are designed to work across all of them, and to enable all of them to grow sustainably. The refreshed approach to spatial planning that is needed across three place typologies is as follows:

- Influencing spatial planning in the places within and between the major metropolitan centres that will be experiencing major change as a result of transformational investment in infrastructure, thus experiencing a major change in terms of their economic geography, providing the opportunity to create to deliver sustainable patterns of growth and a more competitive North;
- Establishing the basis for a forward looking and co-ordinated vision for healthy, sustainable and prosperous growth in those larger urban settlements which fall outside of the influence of major new infrastructure investment, and which do not benefit from a strategic spatial plan based on its local economic and social function;
- Creating the conditions for the regeneration, repurposing and revitalisation of rural and coastal settlements in the North through a place-based approach to planning, to enable them to become more attractive places to live and work, and confident about their future – working with the extraordinary natural assets of the North of England to ensure that strategic plans for rural and coastal communities reflect an integrated and synergistic approach to the mutual benefit of the environment and local communities.

Given the scale and complex, diverse nature of the North of England, relatively few initiatives/actions can realistically be implemented at the pan-Northern level. There is, however, a glaring need for an over-arching spatial planning vision for the North, with a series of more detailed spatial plans at appropriate functional geographies.

The ambitions and recommendations are structured on that basis.
Ambition 1

To become a globally competitive, sustainable and attractive North of England

There is a need to establish a compelling vision which aligns strategic opportunities for housing and economic development with available investment and infrastructure proposals to deliver a globally competitive and attractive North. The vision will need to:

- Capitalise on the opportunity provided by anticipated investment in the existing rail network, HS2 and Northern Powerhouse Rail to connect economies, improve productivity, and enable inclusive, sustainable and competitive growth.
- Ensure that sub-regional and local connectivity is improved provided to connect people with employment, education and training opportunities, to create attractive opportunities for investors and empower local economies to better compete in the national and international markets.
- Capitalise on the opportunity of major infrastructure investment to deliver high-quality places and build successful communities around the new stations, which deliver healthy and sustainable outcomes.
- Be inclusive, embracing the need to foster high-quality rural and urban environments that contribute to the North being an attractive place to live, whilst creating a wider choice and opportunity for young people starting out on their careers.

Case Study
Building the Northern Powerhouse:

Lessons from the Rhine-Ruhr and Randstad, Centre for Cities

June 2016

1.1 A Spatial Vision for the North, to guide the spatial strategies at the functional area level (Ambition 2). At the heart of the Spatial Vision should be the aim of achieving transformational growth; a substantially strengthened and more prosperous Northern economy. The Vision should focus significant investment within economic corridors linked by high quality rail infrastructure to take advantage of the changes in economic geography that this will result in, together with other sustainable transport networks. The Spatial Vision for the North should cover sustainable development, sustainable mobility, transformational housing, planning for zero-carbon, and enhancing cultural heritage and identity.

1.2 A truly transformational vision for housing in the North, moving away from planning by numbers and towards incentives for ambitious, high quality, affordable and sustainable housing provision. This strategic approach should focus on delivering more housing in sustainable locations, and meeting viability, quality and affordability objectives with pan-northern housing deals across the North.

1.3 A Ports, Logistics, Airports and Industrial Strategy, integral to and flowing from the Spatial Vision for the North, to take advantage of new rail capacity for intermodal freight and the industrial economy, ensuring alignment with global markets and international trade routes.

Recommendations

Considerations

Leaders & Enablers

Leadership from the Convention of the North and Transport for the North, working with:

- Treasury/ BEIS/ DfT & MHCLG/ NIC
- Environment Agency & Designated Areas
- Metro Mayors, Combined authorities and County Councils
- NP11 & Northern Powerhouse Partnership
- Homes for the North
- Infrastructure providers
- Local communities

Research into the economics of the Rhine-Ruhr in Germany and the Randstad in the Netherlands was undertaken to draw lessons for the Northern Powerhouse. Reflections on the key lessons learned were summarised as:

- Jobs – especially knowledge-based jobs – benefit from proximity and are concentrated in a few places, notably in the major cities. Cities and city-regions are important for growth.
- Labour markets – neither the Rhine-Ruhr or the Randstad operate as one labour market, but as a number of them.
- Frequent local transport is important to connect people with jobs.
- Economic growth – performance is not simply about better transport, it is also about places being attractive to investors.
- Quality of place is an important for success.

The North of England is a complex, polycentric area. Clearly the cities are important, but what is the vision for the whole of the North, and how could this help to align ‘people and place’ with its changing economic geography?

There needs to be a Northern alternative to the government’s standard methodology for assessing housing need: one which is closely aligned with the transformational growth agenda for the North. This process should recognise the radical changes to the economic geography of the North that are arising from investment in rail infrastructure, technological development and the potential for co-locating housing and economic growth close to transport hubs outside existing urban areas, balancing this against the North’s distinctive built and natural environment.

This will build on John Cridland’s review of international connectivity for the Northern Powerhouse, and the recommendations of the National Infrastructure Commission for sub-national transport bodies to play a greater role in planning. It should include the deployment of electric and hydrogen transport infrastructure for freight, across all modes. The Strategy should take account of significant new development as well as recognising the importance of supporting major existing capabilities, such as Teesport and Manchester Airport.
1.4 A Strategic Infrastructure Tariff: Additional powers for combined authorities to establish Strategic Infrastructure Tariffs, or other land value capture mechanisms, to ensure that the value of public investment in infrastructure is captured for the benefit of local communities, and specifically to enable enhanced development around railway stations to better capitalise on economic development opportunities.

Possible models may align with the Strategic Infrastructure Levy which formed part of recommended changes to the Community Infrastructure Levy, or the London Mayoral Levy.

Leadership from Transport for the North, Combined authorities, NP11 working with:
- Treasury, MHCLG, DfT
- Northern Powerhouse Partnership

Considerations

Leaders & Enablers

Recommendations

There is a need to co-ordinate investment across housing, employment, infrastructure, technology, environment and community, to deliver distinctive, attractive, healthy and prosperous places to live, which deliver the transformational Vision for the North.

- Delivering the transformational Vision for the North – of a strengthened and more prosperous Northern economy – will only happen if the fragmented governance of the North is addressed head-on.
- Spatial strategies will need to be produced for appropriate functional geographies. The GMSF provides a prototype that should be replicated across the North.
- The spatial strategies should not cover the National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, for which separate plans should be produced (with the same status).

Case Study

City Systems:

The role of small and medium sized towns and cities in growing the Northern Powerhouse

IPPR North, June 2016

With these needs in mind, IPPR made six recommendations, including a call for changes to the Green Book appraisal process to properly reflect the contributions of SMCs and the benefits of local connectivity; and for Transport for the North to take account of the diverse and complex nature of the northern urban ecosystem and wider economy.

Case Study

Greater Manchester Spatial Framework

The Greater Manchester Spatial Framework (‘GMSF’) is a spatial planning framework that covers all local authorities which form the Greater Manchester Combined Authority. It sets an overall vision as to how Greater Manchester should develop over the next two decades. The GMSF is being produced collaboratively by the ten local authorities. The plan allocates sites for residential and employment uses; supports the delivery of key infrastructure, including for transport and utilities; and protects important environmental assets across the region. The GMSF has the benefit of a Local Industrial Strategy and Transport Strategy which align with the overall vision, supporting an evidence based approach to allocations for employment and housing sites inside and outside of the existing urban areas, and a review of green belt that reflects anticipated changes to economic geography.

As part of Greater Manchester’s devolution deal they have access to a number of funds which will support the delivery of their plan, including a £600m small sites fund to support councils and developers release smaller sites.
2.1 A Spatial strategy for each functional area in the North should be produced, following the GMSF model, which is based on collaborative strategic planning across a sub-regional area.

Each spatial strategy should be consistent with and flow from the overarching Spatial Vision for the North. It should be consistent with other plans such as the Local Industrial Strategies and Transport Plans, and provide an integrated, ambitious strategy for economic and housing development, and supporting transport and other infrastructure.

Innovation will also be needed to build new funding and investment models which enable the redevelopment of brownfield land. Housing Growth Packages should be central to the strategies.

Spatial strategy should build on the National Infrastructure Commission’s recommendation that Metro Mayors should develop and implement long-term strategies for transport, employment and housing in their areas. These principles should be extended to functional areas beyond the combined authorities so that all areas have the opportunity produce a plan which can align development and infrastructure plans with the strategic vision to deliver the prosperity dividend for northern places.

The spatial strategies should strive to build Northern communities, fit for the future, by encouraging collaboration and innovation in the built and natural environment, such as:

- Encouraging strategic approaches to new settlements, urban extensions, and urban regeneration
- Holistic green/ blue & brown planning, balancing development in the urban fringe and regeneration in the urban centres, with and access to green spaces, flooding, bio-diversity enhancement in rural and urban settings

These opportunity areas could be modelled on the London Opportunity Area approach providing clarity about powers for planning, funding and land acquisition in support of transformational development proposals associated with Northern Powerhouse Rail and accessing an initial joint borrowing facility to kick start housing growth. The potential for development corporations with a remit for guiding growth around station hubs should be explored.

There could be one observatory in each functional area, with an overall ‘hub’ responsible for connecting the various observatories across the North together.

Recommendations

Leaders & Enablers

Leadership from the Convention of the North, Metro Mayors & Combined authorities, County Councils and NP11 working with:
- Treasury
- MHCLG, Cities and Local Growth
- National Park Authorities and AONBs
- Infrastructure providers
- Local communities

2.2 Local Connectivity Plans to ensure the delivery of important connections from strategic transport infrastructure to growth opportunities and local communities.

This should include a strategy for smart mobility solutions, including the need for complementary measures to manage demand for movement by car - and the development of green and blue corridors for cycling and walking.

Leadership from TIN working with:
- Combined authorities
- Local Authorities
- Infrastructure providers
- Local communities

2.3 Strategic Opportunity Areas should be identified for station-led regeneration, environmental improvement and growth.

These opportunity areas could be modelled on the London Opportunity Area approach providing clarity about powers for planning, funding and land acquisition in support of transformational development proposals associated with Northern Powerhouse Rail and accessing an initial joint borrowing facility to kick start housing growth. The potential for development corporations with a remit for guiding growth around station hubs should be explored.

Leadership from Convention of the North, TIN, NP11, Combined authorities, County and District Councils working with:
- Treasury
- MHCLG, Cities and Local Growth Unit
- Infrastructure providers
- Local communities

2.4 Establish a new spatial planning observatory aimed at providing a single open source platform for local plan data, evidence and supporting documents. The observatory should also provide the basis for a pro-active approach to collaboration and innovation.

Leadership from the Convention of the North, Treasury, MHCLG, Open Data Institute, Connected Places Catapult

Case Study

The Borderlands Partnership

The Borderlands Partnership has been established to unlock the potential for sustainable and inclusive economic growth across the South of Scotland and North of England.

The Borderlands Partnership brings together the five cross-border local authorities of Carlisle City Council, Dumfries and Galloway Council, Northumberland County Council and Scottish Borders Council to promote the economic growth of the area that straddles the Scotland-England Border.

The £345 million Borderlands Inclusive Growth Deal is focussed on delivering thousands of new job opportunities, millions of extra tourists to the area, improved digital connectivity and unlocking investment in towns across the region, generating a predicted £1.3bn return on the government’s investment.

It has six key programmes; Digital, Borderlands Energy Investment Company, Destination Borderlands, Quality of Place, Knowledge Exchange Network and Business infrastructure Programme. There are also four place based and other additional transport infrastructure projects.

There is a clear need to provide better, more co-ordinated place-based planning for the rural and coastal towns of the North, so as to:

- Seize the opportunities presented by the move towards greater devolution and local funding, establish “place based” visions for local communities, and adopt an adaptive approach to delivery in small and medium sized rural and coastal towns, and an adaptive approach to delivery to create better, more attractive places to live, work and visit.
- Address the polarisation of investment in town centres (where fewer larger centres are receiving investment at the expense of smaller centres which are often in decline), by adopting a strategic approach to repopulating the high street, and protecting the high street as a place to meet and do business.
- Adopt a strategic approach to investment in high-quality public realm, open spaces and community facilities, creating the high-quality settings for communities, prioritising active modes as a means of travel to encourage healthy and sustainable lifestyles, and promoting wellbeing and community engagement.
- Get ahead of transformational change in the high street, employment, transport, energy and digital connectivity to provide attractive places for talent capture and retention, investment and inclusive growth.

Such principles of good planning are widely applicable, but of particular importance for the rural and coastal communities where change has been, and has the potential to have significant impacts on local communities.

Ambition

To narrow the disparities within the North, creating rural and coastal communities that are attractive places to live, work and visit
3.1 Create an informal ‘place’ network for northern rural and coastal local authorities, to foster collaboration and innovation in local planning, to:
- properly tackle ‘left behind places’ and to
- address the decline in skills and resources in Local Planning Authorities
This should embrace a move away from numbers-driven predictive planning by putting the needs of local communities at the heart of the planning process:
- Creating transformational place-based visions and deliverable strategies for development and infrastructure planning
- Embracing a strategic approach to infrastructure planning and an adaptive management approach to delivery.
This may require a dedicated working group or joint planning committee of chief planning officers to spearhead the work of the ‘place network’ on a shared basis of local importance:
Proprietary tackle ‘left behind places’ – a focus on working with the new spatial planning observatories to (i) collate (and keep updated) broad time-series data/key indicators for the North’s town centres/high streets, and its coastal and market towns, and (ii) spearhead collaborative visioning and spatial planning for those places which the data suggest are being left behind, including the divides within cities where inequality and the greatest numbers of those in poverty are still highly concentrated.
Address the decline in skills and resources in Local Planning Authorities to better deal with the challenges of local planning and delivery, and in particular to support the adaptive management and delivery of complex development, infrastructure requirements and environmental improvements.
Cuts to planning departments are making it increasingly difficult for LPAs to address long-term challenges – such as climate change – which is a key issue for coastal rural and communities. This could include provision of a dedicated resource to support the bidding for national funding programmes to meet their specific challenges, thus avoiding the drift towards solutions that don’t meet the requirements of local communities.

3.2 Provide alternative models for collaborative planning, partnership working and funding to support the delivery of brownfield regeneration and high-quality built environments.
This could be led by the ‘Place’ network, working with the spatial planning observatories. It could include considerations, such as:
- Pragmatic approaches to ‘greenfield-brownfield’ agreements to boost the delivery of affordable homes in and around our settlements
- Town Centre Investment Zones/Local Industrial Strategies/Opportunity Areas/Enterprise Zones/Tax Increment Finance schemes
- New models for lifetime and inter-generational housing, live-work accommodation, flexible mixed-use buildings

3.3 Co-ordinate existing Local Transport, Public Health and Green Infrastructure Plans, taking full account of the need to establish a strategic approach to place making with high quality built and natural environments, and promoting healthy, active travel.
These plans should be delivery focussed, and provide an understanding of cost, risk, programme, governance, planning and land requirements. They should provide the basis for justification of funding and, establish the basis for its Strategic Case.
These plans should take account of work with national transport innovators (Connected Places Catapult etc) to develop appropriate small mobility solutions for rural and coastal towns and their hinterland. For example, demand Responsive Transit solutions provide short term solutions to the need to provide better social and emergency transport, whilst Connected and Autonomous Vehicles might be the future.

3.4 Spatial Plans for National Parks and AONBs, which capitalise on and improve the extra-ordinary natural assets of the North of England. These plans will have the same status as the spatial strategies for the functional economic areas (Ambition 2).
The plans should identify opportunities for environmental enhancement, flood risk management, natural capital services and biodiversity net-gain, to enable these invaluable places to support the overarching objective of transformational but sustainable Northern growth.

Leadership from NP11 and Local Planning Authorities working with:
- MHCLG
- NP11
- Infrastructure providers
- Environmental organisations
- Environment Agency
- Housing associations
- Local communities

Leadership from NP11 working with:
- MHCLG
- Local Planning Authorities

Case Study The Observatory Concept:
Newcastle University, Urban Observatory

Newcastle University, Urban Observatory (‘UO’) is the largest set of publicly available real time urban data in the UK, their sensors gather data across the city with over 50 data types.
The UO is committed to open data which means it is readily accessible for local authorities, developers and researchers. The UO also offers a bespoke monitoring service and work with a range of business, government and industry partners.
Research is at the core of the UO. The UO also assists with the deployment of new sensors to support research projects and provide tools to manage and visualise data in real time.
ODI Leeds is a pioneer node of the Open Data Institute. It was created to explore and deliver the potential of open innovation with data at city scale.
It works to improve lives, help people and create value. Pioneers nodes bring together communities, host events, produce open data projects and help promote understanding of open data in the region and worldwide.
The Royal Town Planning Institute (RTPI)

The RTPI champions the power of planning in creating prosperous places and vibrant communities. We have over 25,000 members in the private, public, academic and voluntary sectors. Using our expertise and research we bring evidence and thought leadership to shape planning policies and thinking, putting the profession at the heart of society’s big debates. We set the standards of planning education and professional behaviour that give our members, wherever they work in the world, a unique ability to meet complex economic, social and environmental challenges. We are the only body in the United Kingdom that confers Chartered status to planners, the highest professional qualification sought after by employers in both private and public sectors.

Report authors

This report was prepared by PBA, now part of Stantec, and the Global Urban Research Unit at Newcastle University, on behalf of the Royal Town Planning Institute and the Great North Plan: People and Place Project Group.

About Peter Brett Associates

PBA, now part of Stantec, is a leading consultancy of planning and environmental consultants, engineers and economists working on local and strategic development planning and infrastructure projects. PBA has 13 offices located around the UK. We aim to plan, design and deliver better places for the communities in which we work.

About Newcastle University, Global Urban Research Unit

Newcastle University is a Russell Group University, ranked in the top 150 of universities in the world and achieved a Gold Award for its teaching excellence. The Global Urban Research Unit combines traditional and innovative approaches to analyse cities and towns, to better understand place and its potential creative and sustainable transformation.
Ambitions for the North
A spatial framework for people and places in the North of England
RTPI Research Paper
May 2019