



# **Delivering inspiring places: the role and status of planning**

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**IDOX plc report to National Planning Forum**

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## 1. The study brief

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1.1 The National Planning Forum (NPF) is the largest cross-sectoral forum focussing on planning in England. It attracts high level representation from a wide range of organisations involved in planning and is making a major contribution to work on delivery and culture change for the planning system in England. Further information about the NPF is available on its website at: <http://www.natplanforum.org.uk>.

1.2 The NPF has launched a series of initiatives to help identify common ground in the area of culture change, including commissioning research into the Conditions for Creative Planning (POS Enterprises 2004). More recently, the NPF Culture Change Working Group has defined key messages for the main players in a report entitled 'Planning – Renewing the Approach' (NPF 2007). This report has been commissioned by NPF to complement, and add momentum to, its drive to support continuing culture change. It is envisaged that the final report will be circulated to the main opinion formers, policymakers and practitioners, and that it will have a significant impact on the future of planning in England.

1.3 The NPF takes as its starting point the Government's commitment to planning in Planning Policy Statement 1: Delivering Sustainable Development as an activity that 'shapes where people live and work and the country we live in (and) plays a key role in supporting the Government's wider social, environmental and economic objectives and for sustainable communities', and spatial planning as an activity that 'goes beyond traditional land use planning'. The Royal Town Planning Institute (RTPI) has devised a useful definition of spatial planning (in its report entitled 'Shaping and Delivering Tomorrow's Places: Effective Practice in Spatial Planning - Executive Summary, published in April 2007) that should be used for the purpose of this commission. Spatial planning is defined as 'the practice of place shaping at the local and regional levels that aims to:

- enable a vision for the future of regions and places that is based on evidence, local distinctiveness and community derived objectives;
- translate this vision into a set of policies, priorities, programmes and land allocations together with the public sector resources to deliver them;
- create a framework for private sector investment and regeneration that promotes economic, environmental and social wellbeing for the area; and
- coordinate the delivery of the vision with other agencies and processes, eg Local Area Agreements (LAAs) and Multi Area Agreements (MAAs)'.

1.4 Culture change requires action and behaviour change by all sectors involved in planning. It requires planning to be seen as a positive force for change that 'shapes places', rather than a system of control. It is about planning that is an exciting profession rather than one bogged down in rules and procedures. Planning consists of a wide range of work and activity undertaken by professionals in the public, private, voluntary and community sectors. Change is happening already in response to both the challenges of implementing the new planning system. There are encouraging signs of progress in different sectors and areas of the country, but there is now a clear need to capitalise on the high profile of planning to ensure that it is seen as a means of finding spatial solutions to a range of increasingly complex challenges. In this way, planning and planners can regain creativity and make a distinctive contribution to shaping the future for communities, the economy and the environment.

1.5 Making progress will mean making further changes and adjustments whilst retaining the best of existing resources in terms of people, skills and knowledge. And it will mean more culture change for all those involved in planning – central government and its agencies, regional institutions, local government, the private sector, the professions, the third sector, communities and individuals involved in planning – all represented on the NPF.

1.6 This part of the commission – a think piece on the issues - focuses on:

- identifying and summarising the key points from existing documentation and evidence on the existing role and status of planning;
- highlighting the potential for providing greater clarity of the role, and improving the status of planning in the context of current high profile planning reforms – how to deliver ‘inspiring planning’; and
- making recommendations on an agenda for the changes needed to achieve an improved status for planning, including an action plan which the NPF can take forward – making the most of its unique position as a cross-sectoral body made up of representatives from the key agencies and interests in planning.

1.7 The final element of the brief required input into the preparation of an Action Plan – to be prepared by the NPF and its members - to address the issues set out in this report and to enable them to focus on key actions that will make a difference to the culture of planning over the next two years.

1.8 The report was prepared by Professor Janice Morphet assisted by Tony Burton OBE and Laura Hughes at IDOX plc. IDOX gratefully acknowledges the support and collaboration of members of the National Planning Forum, and in particular Kay Powell, Secretary. The draft report was discussed in a number of NPF workshops during the summer of 2007.’

## 2. Delivering inspiring places

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2.1 Places are important. They affect how people feel, how businesses function and define where environment should be protected. Everyone has a view on the places they know – where they live, where they grew up, where they work and play. People might value different places as their lives change when ease of access to family or places of work take greater precedence. Some people want to remain all their lives in places where they have grown up, others move to find work and somewhere to live. Some people prefer rural or semi-rural locations, where they are willing to trade reduced access for greater amenity, whereas others prefer to live in towns and cities with better access to work, higher education, arts and culture, social networks and a wide range of services. In some cases, the boundaries between work and home in urban settings are becoming as blurred as they have been traditionally in farming communities, as more people work ‘at home’ and have their social networks at work.

2.2 Businesses also trade from a variety of locations. Financial services prefer to be clustered in London, Norwich or Leeds whereas others need to be distributed to operate such as retail, leisure, culture, health and other services.

2.3 All of these activities need space. The quality and relationship of this space, including the public realm that binds it, are supported through a series of public sector interventions – through planning, highway and parking standards, public transport, fire safety standards and other licensing activity. Interventions in the spaces that we use occur every day and together they enhance the quality of our places.

2.4 The challenge for all those involved in making and investing in places, whether urban or rural, is to make them inspiring. To make them as good as they can be – clean and well managed<sup>1</sup>, well designed in ways that fit their character and purpose, sustainable, with good infrastructure – is an achievable objective. What more is needed to make places inspiring to those who live and work in them and those who pass through? This is the challenge for all who contribute to place shaping and delivery.

2.5 The purpose of this report is to take a closer look at the role of one of the contributors to place shaping and delivery – planning. Along with these other partner activities, planning creates the framework for investment whether this be a new headquarters building or house extension. The role of planning in this process has been frequently considered but remains frequently misunderstood, vilified and to some extent the scapegoat for a lack of wider public policy action.

2.6 Yet planning has not been very good at defending itself from these critics and in demonstrating its role in delivery, place shaping, maintaining value and creating investment. It has been more frequently the subject of reviews than it has been leading the debate. As some might say, “If you are not at the table, you’re on the menu” and this is the place that planning is now – on the menu.

2.7 So how can planning get round the table and rejoin those who are concerned with the role and use of places in our daily lives, in the national economy and for the future? This report has been commissioned to further understand the role of planning, and the importance of planning in the wider team. The report identifies an Action Plan to change the dimensions of this debate, and to add planning to the automatic invite list to sit at the table for what it contributes to improving places for all who use them, both now and in the future.

## 3. What are the drivers of change?

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As we think about places for the future - what kinds of needs will they be required to meet? The key issues which will face places in the coming decade are already in train now and it is worth considering these as we look at the ways in which places can be made for the future. The key drivers are:

### 3.1 Changes in population composition<sup>2</sup>

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The average age is increasing as people are living longer, and they will work for longer and be increasingly active in their old age. Only 14% of people over 60 need care and support, but more of them and single people are living alone, leading to part of the increase in demand for housing. The ethnic mix is becoming increasingly diverse, and there is a high level of migration within and between regions, as well as between countries. People's aspirations are higher and more differentiated than they have been in the past.

### 3.2 The workforce is a reducing proportion of the population<sup>3</sup>

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Like other EU countries, the UK population will cease to replace itself from around 2020 and other policies will be needed to meet labour force issues. Without managing this situation, labour wage rates and thus inflation could rise. A number of initiatives can help to maintain an adequate work force including greater productivity of the existing labour force, longer working life spans and inward migration. A further approach is through promoting a more efficient public sector.

### 3.3 Climate change (and both mitigation and adaptation to it) is going to shape our lives, how and where we live them<sup>4</sup>

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The need to lead more sustainable lifestyles will have influence over a large number of daily living decisions such as home/work locations, more home working, less business travel and a wholesale retrofit of the built stock of the country. It will also influence the management of waste and support energy production from sustainable sources. It is likely to reduce the useable supply of, and increase the demand for, fresh water - making it imperative to manage this scarce resource more prudently. It will also make protection of the environment and biodiversity much more important.

### 3.4 Energy security and diversity<sup>5</sup>

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Energy is set to be a growing agenda item for all governments in Europe, not least the UK. With Middle East oil and Russian gas supplies being increasingly uncertain, the domestic provision of energy supply, low or no carbon generation and more efficient energy consumption will be major drivers in places policy.

### 3.5 Globalisation<sup>6</sup>

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This will continue. However, as India and China become more affluent a higher proportion of their increasing levels of production will be used to support their domestic markets, and their increasing population and economic growth will compete for the natural resources on which we have come to rely. Also the extent to which homogenous products can feed increasingly sophisticated markets may increase to more spatially differentiated product development.

## 3.6 Localisation<sup>7</sup>

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The localisation of production and consumption is now seen to be a consumer preference. However as costs of moving goods, services and people around the globe continue to increase, localised production and consumption may result in a price as well as a moral choice. The Local Government Act 2000 aimed to release local initiative and leadership, recognising the role of local authorities in promoting the health and well-being of their localities, and in developing the vision for the future of their area with stakeholders including their community. The value of local engagement and consensus building underpins Government policy.

## 3.7 Cities and sub-regionalisation<sup>8</sup> –

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City regions and sub-regions are emerging as the place and market construct for the first part of the 21st century. As well as commuting and housing market areas many are becoming strong visitor and business attractors in their own right. Leadership and governance can also work better at this scale and can support sustainable lifestyles and economic patterns of delivery. As existing constructs they also allow the sustainable and efficient use of existing infrastructure investment, its replacement and upgrading to meet both the need for resilience and increased aspirations.

**All these factors will shape the places that we need for the future. How we harness these changes and support our places will have a significant impact on the global competitiveness of the UK and of the quality of life for those who live here.**

All sectors have a responsibility to play their part in ensuring we create the conditions that will enable future generations to build sustainable places.



## 4. What do inspiring places look and feel like?

### 4.1 Local and social cohesion – calm and cared for places

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4.1.1 Communities value cared for places, whether these are in the city centre, in the suburbs or in rural areas. Much of this care will arise from the way in which the public realm in these areas is managed on a daily basis, for example by street cleansing and licensing. However, mistakes in the built environment can last for years.

4.1.2 People also have subliminal perceptions of places and these perceptions convey value and esteem. Every location emits a ‘place language’, just like body language. We all perceive it and respond to it immediately. Yet it is rarely discussed or the subject of active policy intervention. Just as with body language, ‘place language’ can be managed by a variety of methods – some of which are cosmetic and others which need to reach to the core of the place. How is the place valued, how it has been treated and what care is taken over the way it has been put together?

4.1.3 In historic environments – York, Bath, Edinburgh, Ludlow, Durham, and Canterbury – places retain their historic character because of a long term commitment to, and investment in, heritage backed by a strong legislative and policy framework at national level, supportive local policy and consensus and high levels of detailed management. Greater controls on shop fronts, building materials, painting schemes, and respect for plot size and scale immediately communicate a treasured and highly valued environment. These historic environments justify such commitment by the demonstrable value added through their role as custodians of the country’s history and as tourist destinations – the quality of their environment is of cultural value and an economic generator. They are calm to the eye, convey a sense of care and security, have modifying effects on people’s behaviour and attract investment<sup>9</sup>.

4.1.4 Other environments also have increased their value through similar means. Villages and urban localities which are within designated Conservation Areas stand apart from their immediate neighbours – the difference in attention means that it frequently possible to ‘see the join’. Since they were introduced forty years ago, Conservation Areas have had a major role in setting place quality standards to which other areas frequently aspire. The additional controls on development within the Conservation Area repay their owners through added property value.

4.1.5 More recently, this kind of care and micromanagement has started to become the norm in town and city centres. The urban renaissance of Manchester, Glasgow, Birmingham, Sheffield, Newcastle-Gateshead, Leeds, Plymouth, and Brighton has been created through greater intervention from the public sector, whether this is through visioning, higher public realm standards, direct investment or event attraction as in Manchester. Private sector investment has followed a highly visible sense of civic leadership and certainty. Private-public partnerships pave the way to private investment, once a critical point of confidence has been passed.

4.1.6 Rejuvenation has also been occurring in market towns and villages, using the same kinds of tools as the larger urban centres but generally employing them to enhance their historic character<sup>10</sup>. Many of these towns were declining in their role as local service centres following the development of larger retail superstores and out of town, car borne development. Market towns have been able to regain their position as destinations in their own right - places where local food and produce, plants and goods can be purchased by people looking for more locally sourced goods. Farmers markets have become a local service and an attractor of visitors from the wider area<sup>11</sup>.

### 4.2 Local prosperity and contribution to GDP

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4.2.1 All of these initiatives have depended on a number of different interventions for success – leadership, vision, private-public partnerships and public investment. None of them would have been achieved without

planning playing a role. Each site, building or open space makes a contribution to the quality and success of the whole. As economic confidence returns, public investment stabilises and additional gains from private sector development can add to the public good – whether this is through new affordable homes, public open spaces, adjoining public realm improvements or schools and health provision. It is the ability of planning to control and shape development that enhances current and creates new value as part of this process.

4.2.2 If this is the case in those environments and places we value, then what goes wrong elsewhere? Why is planning not seen to contribute to a local value chain? Rather than seeing planning as a means of adding value to immediate environments, why is planning seen as something that gets in the way? Rather than being seen as a means of adding value to business premises and locations, why is planning seen inhibit the economy?

4.2.3 One answer may be that within these set piece locations – town centres, historic environments, city centres – planning is less visible and is seen to be part of a common effort to make places better. Elsewhere, where planning is seen to be acting on its own, as a regulator, people are less sympathetic to its role. In the way that most people experience them, individual planning decisions do not seem to be part of any overall investment or public management strategy for the locality. The adversarial approach to planning that characterised the development control and appeal system in the past has not helped. Although current proposed reforms to the planning appeal system may change this, contestation can always be expected whilst company values rest on property assets and expectations.

4.2.4 The attention paid to the quality of the services and the decisions taken for other areas may be perceived to be lower, often due to lack of time, funding, people or skills. Some areas do not have a well defined character or are easily seen as being transitional places. Yet frequently, urban retail frontages sit on Edwardian or Victorian buildings whose scale and character at street level has been lost. Development proposals are too often considered in a piecemeal way, leading to poorly integrated townscapes rather than thought-through additions that help to create sustainable communities, adding value to adjacent sites and the locality as a whole.

4.2.5 Places can emit confidence, a sense of their own worth and, importantly, a sense of coherence which is difficult to define but is generally a sense that the place is at ease with its surroundings. Places which communicate a positive aura can attract investment and others to them on this basis. However, there are many places where this sense of coherence is absent. This absence may have been there for a number of years or may represent a deteriorating environment. Retail centres and housing areas all look attractive when they are first completed so why do some of them decline? Why do some places look like a hotchpotch of buildings which seem to have no relationship with each other? Think of a place that you dislike or feel needs improvement - even if you cleared the rubbish and improved the paintwork, would this place feel better?

4.2.6 There are many small things that communicate this lack of care and confidence in areas. It can be too many advertising hoardings, vacant sites or buildings, piles of refuse dumped in side streets, vacant shop, steel shutters and a damaged public realm that seems as if it has had no attention for some time (whether this is true or not).

4.2.7 Yet if the national GDP is to rise, investment is needed in these places as much as in those where investors already have established confidence. Areas and neighbourhood which spiral into decline do not move from a reasonable to an unreasonable state overnight. This happens gradually and over a period when some intervention might be able to make a difference. At the worst end, these environments are the subject of integrated action to improve them, but the vast majority of Britain is at neither end of the spectrum.

### 4.3 How can all places be attractive to current users and future investors?

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4.3.1 In the forthcoming Comprehensive Area Assessment process for English local authorities to be introduced in 2009, identifying places at risk of decline at an early point will be a priority for action. This points to better observation mechanisms and change monitoring at the local level coupled by intervention. Better still would be programmes of action in all places so that they do not enter the spiral of decline. Public services have an important role in generating confidence and investment in the vast majority of places where people live and work.

4.3.2 So what does all this tell us about planning's role and effectiveness? It suggests primarily that planning is most effective when it is part of a combined effort in localities to make places better. What can we take from well understood practices of place management to apply to all the other places where we live and work?

**If it is possible to develop a more integrated approach to everywhere, then everywhere might become somewhere.**

### 4.4 Successful regions and sub-regions

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4.4.1 Places provide us with locations for services and activities that meet our needs. These locations have to be as convenient as possible within an economic framework of delivery. People effectively use their immediate sub-region as their source of services, places to visit and to take their leisure. They generally work within this sub-region as well. It becomes their locus, and the area with which they identify, where they choose to buy a house and to shop. The coherence of sub-regions depends on different things. It could be that they revolve around a major city and its transport feeder routes such as Birmingham or Bristol. A sub-region can also be a coherent natural area – the Cotswolds, the Peak District – where landscape, geology and natural features define and delimit the place. Other sub-regions can be conceptual such as the Thames Gateway, West Northamptonshire, the M11 Corridor or the Haven Gateway, where obvious structuring elements such as roads or ports are used to create a thematic unity as new places are created.

4.4.2 Most sub-regions contain places that are more or less successful and that have greater access to the focal points. Employment opportunities may be distributed and it will be through the enhancement of these within the sub-region that the greatest potential increase in employment may occur. More successful centres may attract more shops and services. More successful businesses may spin off or attract other businesses. Most sub-regions have a university which can help to generate employment from associated businesses and help to enrich local cultural life. Universities can serve local students and act as a bridgehead to national and international links for the sub-region.

4.4.3 At the regional level, coherence is more apparent from outside than from within. Within regions, it is the sub-regional differentiation that is understood and explains how the region works. Outside any region, coherence can appear to those who do not know it, yet every region represents a variety of interests, business and landscapes.

4.4.4 Some regions have identifiable coherence already – London and Yorkshire are more similar to Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland than to other regions of England in this respect. Yet experience in Germany shows that over time regions build coherence, recognition and identification from their communities and businesses. Regions also offer a sustainable scale for the provision of specific services for health and the arts, for newspapers and the media. Not only does regional recognition develop over time, but regions which

are more autonomous are seen to be more economically successful<sup>12</sup>. Devolution in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland will demonstrate the efficacy of this model in the UK. In England, London's devolution has been accompanied by economic growth, although it is too soon to see if London's devolved status has been a major driver of this.

4.4.5 Sub-regions and regions can sometimes be more elusive concepts than local authority areas. They can be defined by boundaries but in practice these are porous, as different sub-regions function for different reasons – housing markets or journey to work areas and will certainly be more complex at their edges. For this reason, sub-regions may need to form in more flexible ways to meet this variety of needs. Regions are easier to define and various structures which support them – for example Government Offices, Regional Ministers, proposed Parliamentary Scrutiny Committees and Regional Development Authorities - all help to create the region. Here the Integrated Regional Strategy, Regional Infrastructure Fund and delivery Programme, provide a mechanism for showing how the region works and where investment both needed and to be made in the future. Where these needs are deemed to be national in scale, they can be expected to be managed through a national process<sup>13</sup>.

4, 4.7 People use places in a hierarchical way – they understand and read the differences between places. People may not have overt views about their region or sub-region even if it comprises of all the places they know best. But they will know their regional airport, receive regional news coverage, see a regional version of Metro if they are in an urban area and know about the fortunes of their football clubs. They also have a coherent culture and language. They can share common expectations and patterns of behaviour. Regional leadership and pride can be as important as any other in making inspiring places. Successful regions comprise of a number of inspiring places. The North West has benefited from both Manchester and Liverpool's success. The North East is proud of Newcastle and Gateshead...and Sunderland Football Club.

4.4.8 Scotland, Northern Ireland and Wales have seen the benefit of preparing a National Spatial Strategy – in a variety of ways and producing quite different documents to reflect their differing needs and circumstances. There is a continuing debate about whether there should be a National Spatial Framework for England (NSFE). The Planning White Paper proposes National Policy Statements, which could be a step on the way to an integrated NSFE.

## 4.5 Creating a framework for investment

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4.5.1 A range of tools combined with public service, private sector, and third sector activity at all the scales we have considered – local, sub-regional, regional and national – will create a framework for investment which is more than the sum of its parts. Planning is one of the tools that is used to achieve these ends at all scales. Spatial planning can show areas to be protected, those which need investment and those where demand needs to be managed. Spatial plans need to be integrated with delivery tools such as development management, integrated approaches to public sector investment, political leadership and confidence generated for private sector investment. Each scale needs to be able to communicate its character, its ambition and its programme for improvement.

4.5.2 What difference does all this make? Can it help to make the UK more successful in the face of growing European and global competitiveness? A sense of confidence and cohesion around localities, regions and sub-regions, defined by local leaders exercising leadership can make a difference<sup>14</sup>. Each scale need tools to advance their future and planning is one of these. Planning can show intent, commitment, opportunities and management of threats. Plans can show how investment can be protected and enhanced through regulation and effective management of places. Also what are the alternatives? Localities within Europe that have higher levels of productivity than in the UK – Germany, has a spatial planning systems of this kind. Other EU countries, such as the Netherlands and Sweden, also coordinate their public sector investment to support the

improvement in the quality of places and the quality of life of their inhabitants. Improved productivity in the UK could be supported by investment confidence that local and civic leadership provides.

4.5.3 Planning can – indeed must - play a key role in all of this. Working with others, it can help to establish a vision, provide a positive framework for investment, help to nurture and shape investment through its daily task and give a greater degree of certainty to those who want to invest in a place and its future. It can help to define places, enhance their character, protect the spaces and landscapes that are precious for the future and promote a more carbon efficient lifestyle.

**Planning cannot work on its own, but others cannot create a framework for economic growth and investment without planning.**

## 5. What makes places inspiring and successful?

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There are a number of key ingredients to making successful and inspiring places:

### 5.1 Leadership

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- Realising that something can be done
- Providing leadership through the local authority and Local Strategic Partnership (LSP)/City Centre Partnership
- Engaging public sector managers in taking responsibility for places as well as services, eg London Borough of Barnet
- Leading from the top - Mayors, city champions, community leaders, Chief Executives of local public organisations, eg Milton Keynes, Manchester and Liverpool

### 5.2 Evidence

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- Having an up to date understanding of the social, economic and environmental conditions which is shared across partners
- Ensuring that this evidence base underpins service delivery
- Using the evidence base to assess potential policies and investment
- Using the evidence base for area or thematic scrutinies of the local authority and its partners

### 5.3 Vision

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- Using visioning techniques to develop ideas for the future of places
- Ensuring visions relate to the evidence base
- Using independent facilitators where possible to develop these Visions
- Understanding how visions need to be bounded in reality rather than blank paper exercises
- Attempting to include assessments of alternative investment decisions tied to funding alternatives as part of the process
- Translating visions into delivery programmes identifying roles and responsibilities for action
- Establishing delivery governance arrangements which support programme management
- Being ready for the future – ecocities, London

### 5.4 Confidence

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- Generating confidence in success through the strength of the process and the partnership which supports delivery
- Clearly establish milestones and let people know that they have been met

- Expecting setbacks and delays and plan for these at the outset so confidence is not shattered at the first obstacle
- Thinking of alternative routes and focus on dependencies to ensure that the ends are always the focal point

## 5.5 Working together

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- Developing joint and shared agendas and approaches where possible
- Aligning objectives and outcomes where joint working is not possible
- Focusing on what can be done together

## 5.6 Inclusivity

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- Finding the means to engage everyone
- Starting with an engagement strategy rather than taking decisions
- Keeping inclusivity under review through external means and take any adjusting action

## 5.7 Character building

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- Understanding the distinctiveness of the place and respecting this as it is planned for the future
- Finding distinctiveness in a place deciding how it can be developed and fostered through visioning processes
- Planning the public realm positively and in ways that are in sympathy with the place's character
- Delivering good services if they are going to get people to want to stay – street care, schools, parks – and managing and delivering these alongside other changes

## 5.8 Investment

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- Understanding the waste of failing to use legacy infrastructure investment in urban areas and using this to put sustainability at the heart of what is done
- Auditing all the property and sites that are owned by the public sector because these can be sites where leadership and confidence can be demonstrated
- Assessing ways in which development value can be generated through this public sector investment
- Achieving commitment from the private sector, joint public sector working, eg West Northants, Greater Nottingham, Greater Cambridge, Urban South Hampshire and the Lower Lea Valley

## 5.9 Delivery

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- Translating these into formal processes such as Compulsory Purchase Orders if this makes sense to ensure achievement of wider objectives

- Using the tools that are available – Business Improvement Districts, Conservation Areas, listed building grants, housing association funding, local authority sites and capital programme, lottery funding, EU funding, Compulsory Purchase Orders
- Using all the tools available, eg Plymouth, Ashford and St Anne's



## 6. How can planning in the public sector help to deliver inspiring places?

### 6.1 The Role of Spatial Planning and the Local Development Framework

6.1.1 The Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 established the concept of spatial planning, and this is now becoming more widely understood as ‘the practice of place-shaping’<sup>15</sup> with key components of **plan-making linked to delivery** (the Local Development Framework) and **development management** (formerly known as development control). Spatial planning thus ‘goes beyond traditional land-use planning’ (PPS1<sup>16</sup>).

6.1.2 The 2004 Act also established sustainable development as the core principle underpinning planning ‘at the heart of sustainable development is the simple idea of ensuring a better quality of life for everyone, now and for future generations’ (PPS1). Sustainable development in the UK is based on five guiding principles: living within environmental limits; ensuring a strong, healthy and just society; achieving a sustainable economy; promoting good governance; and using sound science responsibly<sup>17</sup>.

6.1.3 The Government’s main policy objectives for planning<sup>18</sup> are for it to:

- support housing growth in the areas identified for such growth;
- support regeneration/market renewal in other areas;
- ensure that all development is socially, economically and environmentally sustainable;
- move from the periphery to the centre of the council’s activity; and
- deliver change more quickly.

6.1.4 The LDF is a portfolio of documents which provide between them strategic and more detailed planning policy and guidance on the location and type of development within each local authority area for the future. It also provides the framework within which specific planning decisions are taken. At the heart of this process is the Core Strategy which sets out future of the area in spatial terms. The Core Strategy has two key roles. The first is to provide a sound and clear investment framework for the private sector so that future intentions and investment provide some certainty for medium to long term investors. The Core Strategy is evidence-based<sup>19</sup> and all the other development plan documents which make up the LDF derive from this. The second is to be the spatial expression of the Sustainable Community Strategy which sets out the public sector framework for the future of each local authority area.

6.1.5 The contribution of the LDF has been set since the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 and has subsequently been confirmed in the way in which one of the key provisions of the Act, the LDF is assessed at the local level by the Planning Inspectorate PINS and their ‘tests of soundness’<sup>20</sup>. These tests include a focus on deliverability and implementation, although there is no explanation in this or other government documents about this should be accomplished or set out. The 2007 Budget<sup>21</sup> has taken on this issue and proposes that each local authority should have an Implementation Plan to accompany its LDF which has been reinforced in the Planning White Paper, published in May 2007<sup>22</sup>.

6.1.6 The approval of the LDF has to be undertaken by the whole council. The promotion of the council’s own development and proposals for change as identified in the LDF are the responsibility of the council’s executive.

6.1.7 Planning is not the only factor in successful place shaping and local investment but successful and inspiring places need both a planning framework and effective development management to provide them with the means to encourage and support investment from the private sector.

6.1.8 Planning's role is also to help to coordinate the public sector's activities to provide their delivery component. In the next ten years this role is likely to increase as public sector investment converges within a more uniform local public capital programme, as the Core Strategy and other development plan documents come to be accepted as the spatial expression of the Sustainable Community Strategy.

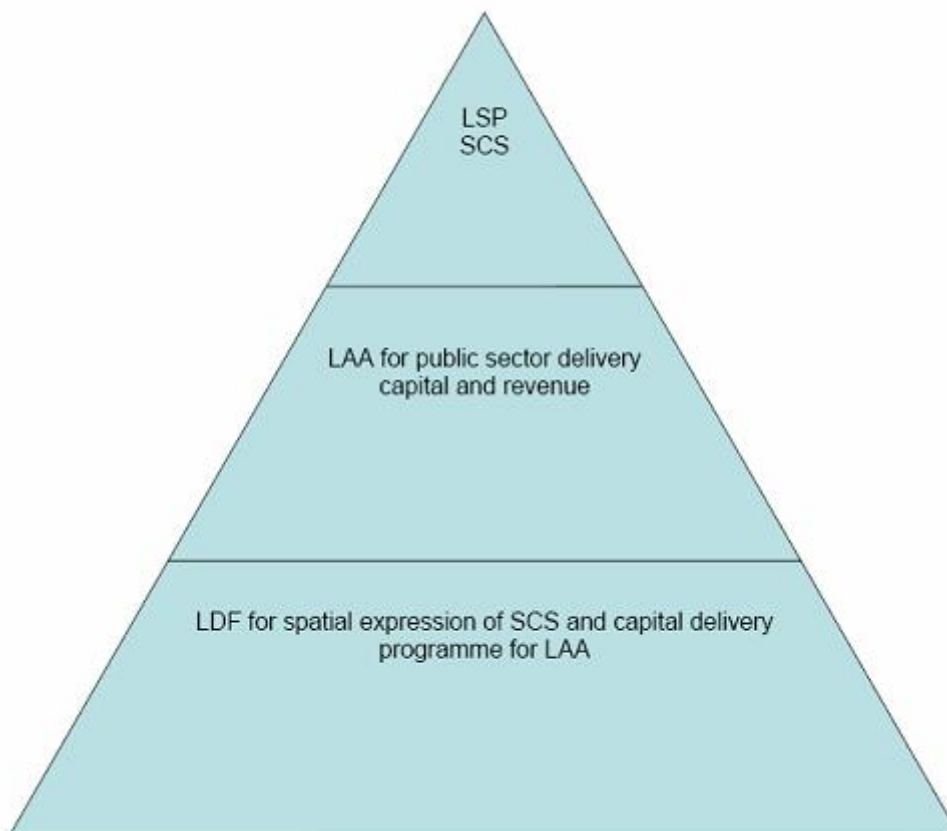


Diagram 1: The role of the LDF in delivering local public sector investment

## 6.2 The role of development management

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6.2.1 The policies in the LDF are delivered through 'development management'. Decisions on planning applications are made by Councillors on the Planning Committee or delegation to planning officers. Before 2000, all planning matters (policy, plans and decisions on applications) were considered by the Planning Committee, comprising executive and backbench members. Since the Local Government Act 2000, the responsibilities for planning regulation have been separated from the functions of Executive Councillors.

6.2.2 Development management is a larger task than development control, which is mainly concerned with determining individual applications and enforcement of planning legislation, whether permission had been given or not. Development management signals a larger task, involving supporting place-shaping with less detailed 'control' and more influence via pre-application advice and mitigation of impacts using planning gain. (S106).

**The role of development management in creating place character through development control guidance and decisions, particular although not exclusively for delegated applications is critical. All these small decisions help to enhance the character of the place and over time can help to build more confidence in the area.**

6.2.3 Pressure in the development management process in recent years has been on the speed with which planning applications and enforcement action are taken. The determination of smaller planning applications within eight weeks of receipt and 13 weeks for larger applications has been one of the driving measures of performance. The focus on these process targets has had a number of effects and has placed more pressure on applicants to ensure that their planning applications are accurate at the point of submission (some sources assess that over 70% of planning applications have some errors within them). As the pressure on speed for the determination of planning applications has increased, planning officers employed by local authorities have argued that the quality of the resulting development has suffered, although there are mixed views on this.

6.2.4 The overriding focus on determining planning applications within a fixed time period has had further effects. The process of planning regulation has become detached from the wider objectives for places and the need to create a sound framework for investment. Planning officers have become more skilled at negotiating planning gain to mitigate the effects of development, but these processes remain erratic and variable between local authorities. Planning officers need to develop greater confidence in the process of negotiating mitigating benefits for their areas. And all local authorities need to develop a clear framework for what is to be sought as mitigating development or funding along the lines of those who already have these in place. Direct and commuted payments need to be tracked to ensure they get spent appropriately. When new facilities are delivered as a result of planning gain these should be celebrated through formal opening ceremonies, plaques and press notices.

**The community should be able to appreciate planning gain that has been negotiated and provided in their name.**

6.2.5 Every area deserves special and focussed effort to develop and enhance its character, whether through the coherence of appearance or through the facilities which are needed to support further investment. Proposals in the Planning White Paper 2007 should enable development managers to be released from work on low-impact householder developments and enabled to spend more time taking a proactive approach to the whole of the area in their care – not only Conservation Areas or those with strong regeneration programmes. Development management can then become regarded by senior politicians and local public service managers as a major tool of managing infrastructure investment, place shaping and enhancement.

**Development management needs to play its full part in generating investment and promoting character everywhere.**

## 6.3 Planning's role in delivery

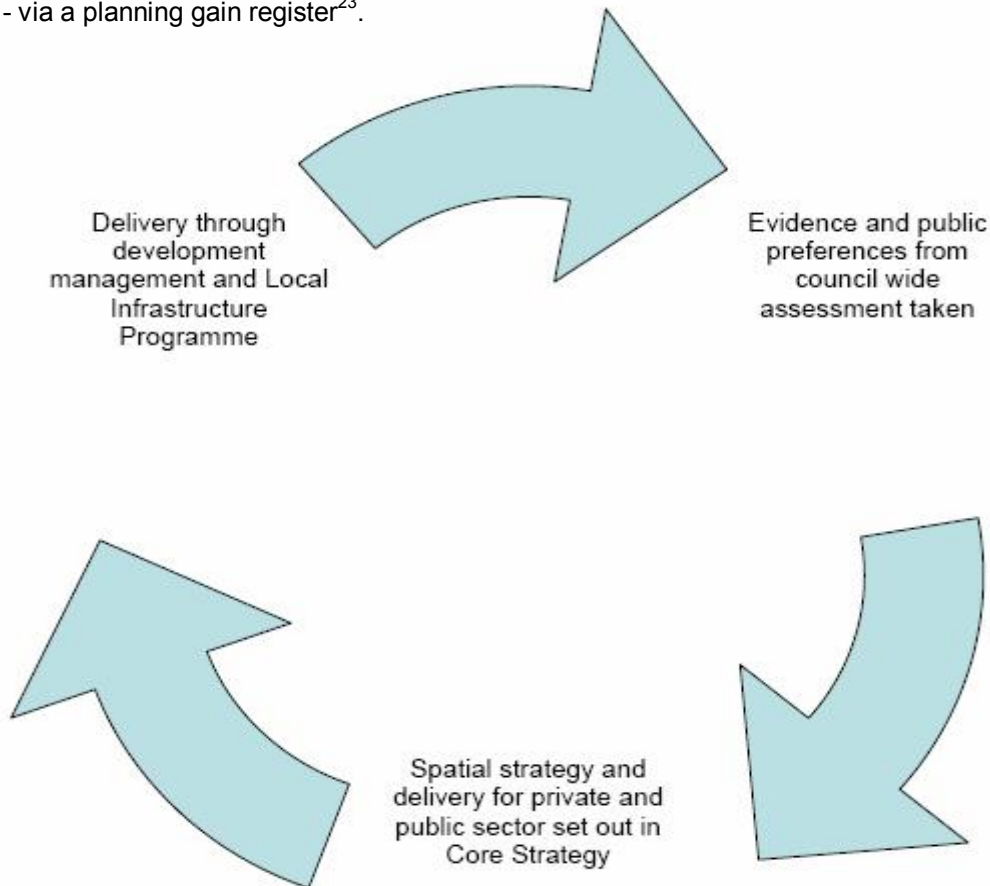
6.3.1 In areas which require regeneration or change, including Growth Areas or Housing Market Renewal Areas, teams are frequently established led by specialists and are now increasingly accompanied by a dedicated organisation – a Special Purpose Vehicle or Local Delivery Vehicle such as an Urban Regeneration Company or Urban Development Corporation. These 'vehicles' are generally small groups of people who have delivery objectives and have various tools available to them to achieve these including funding and planning. These teams can be innovative and promote schemes for change.

**Planning has a key role in delivery. Somewhere between visioning and development management, planning needs to be part of a delivery team, increasingly joined up with housing and regeneration activities on one hand and local public services which support the quality of life on the other.**

6.3.2 A similar approach can be applied outside the Growth Areas. Local implementation teams could sit within the planning department or elsewhere in the council. They could be associated with the MAA, LAA or with the LSP. Wherever they sit, they will need to clearly identify what is required in each local area and how it is to be provided using all the tools available. They could become the 'Place Team'.

**Each local authority area should have a multi-disciplinary 'place team' to deliver public sector investment and identify private sector investment opportunities to enhance the character of their area. This team should include pro-active development management as one of its key agents of delivery.**

6.3.3 This approach will have some significant bearing on the way that development management operates. For a planning applicant, the LDF should eventually provide a clear and transparent statement of the consensus approach for each area – possibly detailed down to specific roads and streets. Flexibility in negotiating within development management will remain but within more tightly constrained parameters on both sides. Planning gain will become an accepted mechanism for local investment, backed by a means of showing the cumulative impact of public and private sector investment - openly required and accounted for on delivery - via a planning gain register<sup>23</sup>.



**Diagram 2: Developing and delivering the local capital investment programme through the planning process**

## 6.4 Planning's role in delivering wider public sector reform

6.4.1 We also need to look at the wider context. As public service reform continues in the coming periods to 2012 and 2016, there is increasing pressure on local authorities and others to reduce the costs of the public sector and to improve the delivery to citizens. The expected ways in which this will be achieved have already been set out in variety of reports, many of which have been prepared for the next spending period, 2008-2012 which will be covered by the next Spending Review. These reviews, led by individuals reporting to the Treasury will have a significant impact on public sector services. In summary, those most likely to have most effect on places and planning's role in their delivery are:

<b>Lyons</b>	place shaping, local taxation <sup>24</sup>
<b>Hampton</b>	integrating business regulation <sup>25</sup>
<b>Varney</b>	integrating customer services at point of delivery across the whole of the public sector and reviewing the public estate as an asset to be used for investment <sup>26</sup>
<b>Stern</b>	active management of the costs of climate change <sup>27</sup>
<b>Eddington</b>	the active integration of infrastructure delivery with other policies <sup>28</sup>
<b>Barker</b>	the delivery of additional housing within communities <sup>29</sup>
<b>Leitch</b>	delivering the skills required to support the economy <sup>30</sup>

6.4.1 Public service reform will have a number of influences on the way in which public sector services and investment will be delivered at the local level. They will have effects on the whole of the public sector which will need to demonstrate that its investment, services and advocacy are based on:

- a common and transparent evidence base
- community preferences
- common relationships with the community, business and the voluntary sector
- common relationships with Government and its agencies
- pooled budgets
- common investment programme
- integrated service delivery
- devolved services from central government to be integrated
- common front end for customers
- common [and reduced] back office processes
- common performance management systems
- integrated risk assessment

6.4.3 Within this convergent public sector, many services will have new roles to play. For some services, such as those dealing with children or older people, changes are well underway with pooled budgets, aligned

performance standards, workforce reform and combined management. These changes have also had important effects on the ways in which the private and voluntary sectors are organised to support them. Planning has made less progress to date in more integrated public sector delivery. A change will also be required in the way private sector perceives the role of planning in investment delivery. This can be summarised as follows:

## **Implications of public sector reform for public planning services**

**Planning policy** Core Strategies are set within the SCS framework for action, priority and investment

**Places Team** identification of local character and requirements with proactive development and other initiatives to deliver them within a programmes approach

**Development management** operates within much more tightly defined parameters of local deliverables as established by planning policy and the places team

## **Implications of public sector reform for private sector**

**Developers** will need to engage in public sector planning and investment processes earlier and be aware of likely requirements as part of development appraisals

**Investors** will need to be aware of the wider approach to public sector investment and the associated opportunities for medium and long term investment in a wider range of localities

**Planning consultants** will need to advise their clients on the wider requirements of the area as expressed in the SCS in addition to restricting focus on traditional planning documents and will need to be aware of the changing local infrastructure framework

## **6.5 The effective elements of planning in the future will need to be<sup>31</sup>:**

### **6.5.1**

- **A new role for planning within local authorities linked with other activities including SCS, LAAs and MAAs**
- **A key role for planning in each local authority's delivery and implementation programme**
- **A common consultation and engagement strategy and full use of all the public feedback received**
- **A common evidence base and information repository shared between partners that is also accessible to the public**
- **The key role of development management in delivering tomorrow's places**
- **A Local Infrastructure Programme, together with a Local Infrastructure Group to deliver places through effective resource management and coordination**
- **A Regional Infrastructure Programme, together with a Regional Infrastructure Group to deliver places through effective resource management and coordination**
- **Active horizontal and vertical integration between strategies, policies and resources for regions, sub-regions, localities and communities**

- **Provision of new skills and training for all planners including MBAs and courses on project and programme management**

6.5.2 With such an important role, it is clear why the role and status of planning, particularly in the public sector, will remain under continued increasing scrutiny as planning is set to take a greater part in the delivery of places and their social, economic and environmental infrastructure<sup>32</sup>. It makes it even more important that planning and planners regain the ability to instil confidence in the users of the service, including politicians, applicants and communities.

## 6.6 Improving planning's performance to support national economic objectives

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6.6.1 More recently, the private sector's concerns have primarily been channelled through the Barker and Eddington reports, where the national economy is said to be held back through a lack of provision of adequate housing in appropriate volumes and locations, inadequate investment in local and regional infrastructure and delays on major planning decisions which concern airports, energy provision and other key national infrastructure. At a local level, there is concern from all sectors about the cost and delay of planning consents for smaller householder development with low impact.

6.6.2 Local authorities are now performing better<sup>33</sup> at making decisions within eight weeks for householder applications with a greater number of planning applications delegated to officers, but the larger number of applications in the pipeline has increased pressure on planners and planning. Implementation of the proposed new 'impact' regime should reduce the number of minor householder applications substantially. After this is introduced, local authorities should be able to concentrate on more significant planning applications in their area.

6.6.3 There has been support for local authorities to improve the effectiveness of their performance. Local authorities have received Planning Delivery Grant from Central Government for the period 2005-08 in order to help them invest in their service and to modernise. However, much of this funding has gone into the provision of temporary staff to enable performance targets to be met. Much remains to be done in capturing the benefits realisation from IT investment, business process reengineering and local customer service integration. After 2008, once Planning Delivery Grant comes to an end, planning authorities will need to take a more business like approach to their service delivery.

6.6.4 Other opportunities to improve the service are available. The development team approach is being used on larger applications to establish early timetables for process and many local authorities provide pre-application advice to applicants. The Planning White Paper 2007 is also proposing that planning fees be set at the local level, thus potentially stimulating local authority interest in generating larger planning applications and charging for pre-application advice.

6.6.5 However at the other end of the size scale, Government and business interests continue to be concerned about the long time-frames needed for major infrastructure planning and decision-making; although much of this is covered by non-planning legislation, decisions include deemed planning consent. The Planning Inspectorate has already speeded up delivery of major planning inquiries following revision of the Inquiry Procedure Rules. Proposals contained in the Planning White Paper 2007 include creation of a National Planning Commission to deal with major infrastructure projects.

6.6.6 The performance of planning in delivering economic investment and housing has been under the spotlight for thirty years. In the last ten years, pressure to reform the system and make it more responsive to these economic needs has been undertaken through:

- Local Government Act 2000



- Planning Green Paper<sup>34</sup> in 2001
- Barker Review of Housing
- Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004
- Development of the Planning Portal
- Eddington Review of Transport
- Barker Review of Land Use Planning
- Review of Householder Consents 2005
- Consultation on LSPs 2005
- Spatial Plans in Practice project
- Development of 1APP planning application processes
- Lyons Review 2006
- Audit Commission Review 2006
- Planning Together 2007
- Budget 2007
- Planning White Paper 2007
- Shaping and Delivering Places 2007
- Sub National Review of Economic Development and Regeneration 2007
- Housing White Paper 2007
- Spending Review 2007

6.6.7 All of these reports and reviews have suggested ways in which the planning system needs to be changed to deliver more effectively and a number of changes have followed. As many of these changes have yet to work their way through the system, it is too soon to see their full impact, although we have begun to see some unintended consequences in the separation of planning regulation from other planning issues in the council and the lack of fulfilment of the two other key roles for councillors – that of promotion for the executive and full policy debates for councils.

6.6.8 In addition to these proposed changes to the planning system, increasingly there has been an emphasis on planning practitioners in the public sector:

- Are there enough?
- Are they working efficiently?
- Are they being supported through the change agenda?
- Do they have the right skills?
- Do they have enough resources?
- Are they sufficiently senior in the organisation?

6.6.9 These questions have been raised through a series of studies and subsequent initiatives to support public sector planners including Egan<sup>35</sup>, and the major implications as discussed in Section 9.



## 7. Planning as a barometer of the nation's economic health: what is the private sector's role in planning?

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### 7.1 Regulating the market

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7.1.1 The Planning White Paper 2007 calls for more consideration of market indicators by the planning system. However that goal is pursued, an understanding of development economics and the way it is changing should be part of every planner's toolkit. The role and value of land in Britain is fundamental to personal and corporate wealth. As a means of providing an alternative pension and underpinning the balance sheets of British companies the role of property cannot be overestimated; the pressure that it creates on planning regulation and this situation is unique compared with the rest of the world. For the vast majority of householders, no alternative forms of pension product are perceived to provide an expected financial gain of the same proportion, and if these resources are not needed for the individual, then they are being used as a mechanism to pass on wealth as inheritance<sup>36</sup>. This situation is mirrored in a number of other parts of the world. The only way that it is likely to change is through the recognition of alternative investment products with the same likely yield over time.

7.1.2 The same is true in the private sector. Since in the 1950s, one of the key indicators used to assess the country's economic health has been the number of new housing starts on green field sites, and the reaction of the financial press and government if new housing starts fall<sup>37</sup>. The structure of the housing construction industry also reflects this division with new build being run by separate companies within group structures (these issues have been discussed in more detail in 'Homes for the Future: More Affordable, More Sustainable', the Housing Green Paper 2007).

7.1.3 In the business sector, property values are a key feature of the balance sheets of UK companies. Since the 1950s, when it became clear to many smaller manufacturing companies that their site was worth more than their business, property ownership, valuation and management have become key features of City assessments of company success. The recent revaluation of Sainsbury's properties that was used to stave off unwelcome takeover bids is an example of this as is the recent takeover of Boots by a leverage finance company. Indeed the principle of leverage finance is to maximise the utilisation of a company's assets – including property – by breaking it up into more profitable component parts. The growth of the leverage finance business in the City of London is in part due to the growth on the London markets overall, but is also due to fact that there is a long established tradition of buying companies in order to maximise their assets rather than their business in the UK. Residential as well as commercial property is now routinely part of company assets rather than owned by individuals.

7.1.4 Once we bring together the elements of this evaluation we find that we have a demand and supply market. People want housing value growth to improve their pension funds and the private sector, also frequently driven by pension fund investment, wants to maximise the value of the investment in property on a separate agenda from that of businesses as a whole.

7.1.5 Planning acts as a market regulator by conferring value on those sites where need can be demonstrated and supplied by the market. On the occasions where planning has been derestricted, most famously in one of the first Enterprise Zones set up in the Isle of Dogs in 1982, development faltered. It was at this point, when the planning system was under the most likely position of dismantlement that the political penny dropped. Planning conferred value by both restricting supply and by guaranteeing value through regulating neighbouring uses in the same way.

## 7.2 The role of the market

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7.2.1 The construction, development and house building industries provide the majority of the investment in new housing, and deliver most of the new homes being built currently. House-building involves direct and indirect employment and training opportunities, as well as contributing the economic benefit of adding to the housing stock. House builders are thus major players in the economy with the private housebuilding market estimated at £20 billion in 2006.

7.2.2 But there are major concerns about the operation of this market. The Office of Fair Trading reports that customer satisfaction has not increased since the Barker Review of Housing Supply<sup>38</sup> looked at the reasons for the lack of supply and low responsiveness of housing in the UK. The OFT is now conducting a major review on how competition and the planning system affect the delivery of new homes and homebuyers' levels of satisfaction with the new homes they purchase.

7.2.3 A major problem is the impact of land value, which comprises an increasingly large element of the unit purchase price of homes, and varies considerably from place to place or even street to street. The reasons for this are complex and controversial and include action by house builders to maximise value to their shareholders by for example holding banks of land until they perceive the best market conditions are available and starting development in order to safeguard their position even if there is then a long delay before implementation.

7.2.4 Housing represents a major investment for owner occupiers, and there has been increasing interest from the private buy-to-let and investment market. This demand from a variety of sources, limited supply of developable land, a tendency to see the negative impacts rather than the benefits of new building, delays in provision of infrastructure, and a planning system that has proved to be slow, have all contributed to rising prices and a lack of affordability particularly for first time buyers.

7.2.5 Tenure is an important part of this issue. Home ownership is not the most appropriate option for everyone; some people need to move to find work, family circumstances or personal finances may change. Problems arise when some people have attempted to buy, and have then defaulted on payments, particularly in the sub-prime mortgage market. Finding ways of providing well designed and built homes in attractive, sustainable locations at a rental or price that people can afford is thus a continuing challenge.

7.2.6 The Barker review underlined the need for the housing market to be better understood and properly regulated. She suggested that a Planning Gain Supplement (PGS) should be levied on the uplift in land values following the grant of planning permission. However, after consultation on this proposal and other options in the Housing Green Paper, the Government has decided to go ahead with a Planning Charge rather than PGS. This will be combined with a narrower focus for S106 agreements for on-site infrastructure and affordable housing.

7.2.7 After years when private house building has provided the majority of the output, there is to be an injection of public assets and funding into the housing market which will change the operation of current supply of housing with the expectation that this will change the pattern of demand and thus price.

7.2.8 All these initiatives are yet to be implemented. It can be expected that they suppliers of development and the market will respond in new unanticipated ways – for example the increase in apartments in cities has led to a massive increase in buy to let activity, sometimes funded by institutional or private pension funds, which in some places is keeping accommodation vacant and which was not anticipated when this type of development was proposed to increase the available housing units. In a market which is supported to such a large extent by wealth creation at the point of sale it is inevitable that these kinds of responses will emerge and that public policy will also subsequently respond.

7.2.9 Where the market has had little or no interest in investment, planning developed into economic development and regeneration. Here planning has been used positively as a public investment intervention

and market maker to provide certainty to private investors with the scale of social and physical investment – transport, public goods such as schools and training.

7.2.10 In the past, attempts have been made to divert some of the energy in markets that were overheating to areas where markets were failing – regional policy was an example of this trickle down economic policy in practice – but such policies have now been seen to be of limited use. Also, where markets have generated more demand, the land market and planning is capable of responding through the increase in permissions given to greenfield sites for development and through the change of land use away from those with lower market values e.g. industrial sites to those where the market wishes to invest e.g. housing and retail.

## 7.3 Local adaptations to market demands

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7.3.1 At the local level, the urban fabric has also proved to be remarkably adept at change. The restructuring of the branch banking system has created the opportunity for expanding requirements for pubs, restaurants and coffee bars to suit mobile and flexible working patterns whilst eating outside the home has become commonplace. Grade 1 Listed Buildings, which have long struggled to find suitable uses, are being utilised by Universities – Derby University's role in Buxton supported by HEFCE and English Heritage has made a major impact on investment in other listed buildings in the town. The same is true in Manchester, UCL and Strathclyde Universities where former warehouses and hospitals have been used for new accommodation.

7.3.2 At the local level, other spaces have been found for uses that match changing life styles. Church halls, formerly infrequently used, have had a new lease of life as day nurseries for working parents. Cinemas have been created from warehouses and factories – as in the Printworks and Northern Quarter in Manchester, Fort Dunlop in Birmingham and shopping centres from Engine Sheds or stations as in Swindon and Bath. Former operational land is being released to create new urban space as in White City, Ancoats, and Kings Cross whilst former MoD sites are proposed as the location of new eco-cities. Other former public sector sites have created the opportunity for new employment development to meet modern needs in city hearts as in Nottingham and Leeds. In rural areas, new settlements have been created such as Poundbury or existing infrastructure is being deployed to better effect in Northamptonshire. The Eden project demonstrated that investment could be created in rural areas in entirely new ways whilst the right to roam and extending the number of National Parks have both had significant effects on countryside access and safeguarding.

## 7.4 Planning's role in creating value

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7.4.1 In all of this the role of planning to support the regulation or making of markets has been critical. Yet the role of planning in creating value is little understood, particularly at the local level. Much of the success of planning as measured through planning award schemes have been for major redevelopment or regeneration schemes or 'set pieces' that have transformed major area of towns and cities. These are fundamentally important. At the same time, it is also the day to day decision making on planning applications at the local level which contributes significantly to financial and social value. Areas which are more heavily regulated such as Conservation Areas and those within areas designated to be controlled under an Article 4 direction generally reward property owners with increased value.

7.4.2 Planning regulation guarantees not only the standard of what is implemented but, through enforcement, polices those things which are done which detract from these areas. Outside these more regulated areas, value is conferred by other activities including investment in infrastructure, the public realm, community safety considerations and energy conservation. Less recognised is the role that planning has in 'calming' environments, making them fit well together and respecting what is there already. This has a significant role in supporting mental health and community cohesion which is rarely discussed. Planning is almost always associated with mending and enhancing local environments as it conducts its daily business and this is as much an important role as the larger processes of regeneration and change.

## 8. What does the public expect of planning?

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8.1 The public expects planning to be quick and effective when they are seeking planning permission for their own development, and to be tougher when they wish to object to development proposals.

**A common public view of planning...**

**Planning is too tough when you want to do something and too weak when you want to stop something.**

8.2 However, most people's experience of planning is from the places that they use everyday – where they live and where they go to work. For many people these are not remarkable environments and some have more choice than others about these locations. Many people have no expectation that these environments will be changed or improved. Even when change does arise, it is generally about the kind of change that make people feel uneasy – larger scale change than they are ready for.

8.3 A more proactive approach to enhancing local character and service delivery could make a considerable difference. People may feel more secure to see public services on the streets. They may feel positively encouraged if they believe that all the public services are not only doing their job but also attempting to improve places and their facilities.

8.4 An understanding of the public's expectation of planning, its satisfaction levels and the ways in which greater confidence could be generated in the new approach to planning delivery, regulation and place shaping.

## 9. What is the planners' role in delivering inspiring places?

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### 9.1 Why are planners not heard?

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9.1.1 Planning has a major role in delivering inspiring places for the future. Using the widest range of place shaping approaches, local authorities will need to use planning as one of its key delivery tools for the future. Yet planning is not seen to have a high status in the local authority, with its current focus on regulatory activity. Planners need to be ready to take on their new role.

9.1.2 Planning, once seen as a means of changing places and improving environments, is now seen to be a problem, at all levels of governance. Why is this loss of status and confidence in planning occurring? There are likely to be a number of reasons.

9.1.3 The first is the separation of executive and backbench member involvement in planning, which has tended to divide the planning service and legitimate member involvement in it. The second key reason why planning has lost status is its limited engagement with the general move towards integration of public services<sup>39</sup> at the local level. Up to now, planning has been omitted from LAAs and MAAs, although it is understood that this will be addressed following the implementation Spending Review from 2008 onwards. Following a consultation paper in late 2005 on improved management of SCS<sup>40</sup>, guidance is expected to issue in November 2007. This is likely to focus LSPs on place shaping, and may give them executive power to deliver directly. The Local Government White Paper 2006 proposes a closer working arrangement between the SCS and LDF which has subsequently been reinforced through the publication 'Planning Together' (CLG/RTPI 2007).

9.1.4 From the research undertaken for the study mentioned in the project scope, 'Shaping and Delivering Tomorrow's Places: Effective Practice in Spatial Planning' (May 2007), it is clear that planners do not fully understand this integrated relationship, nor the wider role of spatial planning in the public sector. Rather than looking forward at the role of planning in delivering and shaping tomorrow's places, there are continuing attempts to retrofit new systems into approaches to planning as they have been operated since the early 1990s.

9.1.5 The Local Government White Paper 2006 has suggested that position this might, in part, be rectified by the restoration of a senior officer responsible for planning to each local authority's management team<sup>41</sup>. Recent proposals in the Local Government White Paper to amend this legislation to allow executive members to sit on the planning and licensing committees of local authority may not fully address this issue.

**Why is planning not seen to be important by leaders and decision makers?**

9.1.6 This report has demonstrated the current and future role of planning and its central position in maintaining and creating value through its daily activities in shaping and delivering places. Yet planning has a low status in the wider development industry and is frequently seen as a hurdle rather than positive tool to be used. Why is this?

### 9.2 Planning is predominantly in the public sector

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9.2.1 Many of the professionals who work within the development industry operate from the private sector – chartered surveyors, solicitors, barristers, investment finance houses all operate for predominantly private

sector clients. This group has now been joined by a growing band of professional planners who work in the private sector – the RTPI's membership is now comprised of more planners in the private than the public sector, although this is not generally recognised. The relationship between the public sector planners and the private sector development professionals is based on the adversarial nature of planning processes in the UK. Earlier in the report the role of planning creating value, the role of property for investment, company and leverage finance interest is such that it has its own construct which rests on the uncertain outcome of a regulatory process. In comparisons with planners in the private sector, public sector planners are less well paid and have to meet public service targets which are more onerous than those for business operation. As planners have been castigated by government for failing to meet planning delivery targets, it has become common to see public sector planners as the problem 'bone' that the rest of the development industry pats as the source of many of the problems in the development system. As we have seen earlier this is not the case.

## 9.3 Planning is too complex

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9.3.1 The process of determining planning consent confers both rights and responsibilities on the applicants. The rights are for development but the responsibilities are set out in how this can be achieved and to the communities within which this development sits. But it is seen as:

- taking too long
- too inflexible
- not seen to deliver
- too inward looking
- not corporate activity
- no clear role for political leadership
- failure expected

9.3.2 So, with some exceptions, are planners generally not heard? There seem to be a number of key reasons which are all capable of solution:

- Need to know more about agenda for public services including LAAs/LSPs
- Need to see benefit in being part of wider process
- Need to see that the planning process is part of a wider team effort for place shaping and delivery e.g. with community strategies and consultation
- Need to adopt the language of local government rather than that of planning
- Need more management training
- Need to be part of the corporate team at the local level
- Need to be more outward looking
- Need to know how their role fits into whole

## 9.4 Planning and planners: barrier and gap analysis

### 1: Planning

<p><b>Strengths</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Well known</li> <li>• Confers value</li> <li>• Seen to be working better in delivering decisions</li> </ul>	<p><b>Weaknesses</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Seen to be focussed on process and not on delivered outcomes</li> <li>• Not seen to be delivering the same agenda as the rest of the local public sector</li> <li>• Detached from senior politicians and officers</li> </ul>
<p><b>Opportunities</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To deliver place shaping</li> <li>• To be central to new public and private investment</li> <li>• To deliver the public sector's capital programme</li> </ul>	<p><b>Threats</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Be bypassed by others</li> <li>• Be seen to be the problem</li> <li>• Be seen to add to the costs of delivery rather than enabling it</li> </ul>

### 1: Planners

<p><b>Strengths</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Analytical approaches</li> <li>• Able to deal with complexity</li> <li>• Understand process delivery</li> <li>• Good relationships with councillors</li> </ul>	<p><b>Weaknesses</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Focussed on process</li> <li>• Prefer to work on their own</li> <li>• Management skills not generally seen to be important</li> <li>• Poor relationships with the rest of the organisation</li> </ul>
<p><b>Opportunities</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To be at the heart of place shaping and change</li> <li>• To enable the vision and its delivery</li> <li>• To be at the heart of the of the future of places</li> </ul>	<p><b>Threats</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To stay looking at process</li> <li>• To discourage young planners from public service through out- dated practices and poor management</li> <li>• To discourage other from joint working from sense of superior processes</li> </ul>



## 9.5 Barriers

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9.5.1 There are a number of key barriers which can be identified which are standing in the way of planning being recognised and utilised fully in shaping paces and creating local investment frameworks which we have identified in this report. These are:

- lack of expectation of what planning can deliver from planners and those who manage the context in which it operates
- culture – in all sectors – public, private, voluntary, in allied fields, from users – planners need to change themselves
- adversarial style
- planning is seen to be a negative tool
- financial understanding is poor and it is leading to underperformance in local delivery through failure to engage with investors and set out planning gain requirements
- current levels of integration in the wider public system need improvement
- myths
  - quality suffers if performance improves
  - health won't work with us
  - we know more about consultation than anyone else
  - we can't work with anyone else because of the legal nature of our process
  - we are too busy to get involved
  - we know what the community wants delivered
  - we don't have time for pre-application advice
  - customer services can't be involved in delivering advice to the public because they are not planners
  - we need paper filing systems
  - we can't read plans on a screen

## 9.6 What do planners need to improve?

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9.6.1 So how can planners undertake their role better? What are the implications for planning management, planners' professional development, IT and training? The Egan Review identified the skills needed to create sustainable communities. It considered a number of key issues for planning, including both the skills required and the overall number of professionals available. These skills are needed across all sectors.

### 9.6.2 Key generic skill for sustainable communities as defined by the Egan Review<sup>42</sup>



- Inclusive visioning
- Project management
- Leadership
- Breakthrough thinking/brokerage
- Team and partnership working
- 'Making it happen'
- Process and change management
- Financial management and appraisal
- Stakeholder management
- Analysis, decision making, evaluation
- Communication
- Conflict resolution customer awareness

9.6.3 The evidence for the Egan Review recommendations for planning for making these judgements was taken from high level data sets. Subsequently an in-depth study was commissioned on the skills issues by the Academy of Sustainable Communities (ASC) in March 2007<sup>43</sup>. This project had as its aim to assess the information available on skills gaps across all the professions who contribute to making sustainable communities and also to make projections for the future. This study found that it is the generic skills that gaps remain and these are:

- leadership
- community engagement
- communication
- project management
- conflict resolution

9.6.4 In respect of planning, the ASC study recognises that the RTPI is already undertaking further work on identifying how these skills gaps could be remedied. For other professions, it points to work being undertaken with the Regional Centres of Excellence for regeneration and the ASC, pointing out engineering as the professional group needing to pay more attention to these generic skills.

9.6.5 This ASC study also reviewed the labour market and training issues for each specific professional group including planning.

**ASC survey of skills gaps 2007**

**Summary of findings – planning**

**Labour market issues**

Figures indicate that public employers are struggling to recruit and retain sufficient numbers of planning professionals. This appears particularly acute at senior and experienced levels within public planning.

Survey evidence suggests that over half of public employers face recruitment difficulties, and one third have to offer market supplements to candidates.

Research in London shows that these problems may in part be a result of fewer planning graduates and competition between public employers. Furthermore, public planners appear to be being attracted into the private sector or out of the profession altogether.

Anecdotal evidence suggests that recruitment and retention difficulties are also being felt among private firms.

Involvement of private firms in public planning is on the increase.

**Generic skills issues**

Recent studies and commissioned work indicate an increased focus on generic skills by the profession and, more specifically, the RTPI.

Based on their own assessments, planners would like to develop further their project management and presentational skills the most. Other areas identified by more than half of those asked included leadership and motivation; financial appraisal; budgeting; community involvement; strategic thinking; and change management.

External assessment (by the Audit Commission) suggests that the profession should focus on communication, leadership, and negotiation and conflict resolution.

9.6.6 This report also pulls together information from a range of studies which looked at the shortage of planning staff and staff turnover.

**Table 1: Recruitment and retention difficulties (from ASC Skills Gap Study 2007)**

	% of local authorities	
	Planning development control*	Other planning*
Recruitment difficulties	55%	50%
Use of market supplements	35%	26%
Retention difficulties	33%	28%

\*managers and professional posts only

Source: Local Government Pay and Workforce Strategy Survey 2006

**Table 2: Labour turnover and vacant posts (from ASC Skills Gap Study 2007)**

	Managerial & professional	Support & admin	Total
Labour turnover	15%	11%	13%
Vacant posts	9%	6%	8%

9.6.7 Finally this study draws upon the RTPI Survey of Skills Requirements which highlights the new skills identified by planners.

**The main findings from the RTPI Skills Survey were as follows:**

(1) Four skills were cited as strengths by fewer than half of respondents: staff appraisal, change management, financial appraisal and budgeting. Financial appraisal and budgeting were the least cited strengths (34% and 42% of respondents respectively).

(2) Most popular areas for further development were project management (62%); and public speaking and presentational skills (60%).

(3) Other areas for further development mentioned by more than half of respondents were leadership and motivation; financial appraisal; budgeting; community involvement; strategic thinking; and change management.

From Oxford Brookes 'Skill Base in the Planning System' ODPM 2004 quoted in ASC Study of Skills Gaps 2007

9.6.8 Other work has been undertaken to support planners in their roles in more practical ways. In the Comprehensive Spending Review in 2004, a number of key initiatives were introduced:

- Planning Delivery Grant
- A culture change programme for planning supported by Central Government
- Bursaries to support the initial training of more planners
- The creation of the Planning Advisory Service
- The establishment of a distance learning course in spatial planning at the University of the West of England (UWE)

9.6.9 Some efforts have been made to make planning more efficient and effective. The early development of the Planning Portal and subsequent 1APP project have been attempts to help to streamline the planning application service for both the applicant and also to help to integrate planning applications in to the back office. Allied initiatives deriving from local authorities were developed through Parsol which introduced:

- Fast Track – an approach for registered planning agents
- Expert Systems – to help applicants receive an indicative indication of planning application requirements on line
- eService Delivery Standards to enable each local authority to benchmark its planning service against standards which are set at three levels
- Parsol Exchange

9.6.10 The role of e-planning was also reinforced through the local e-government programme 2000-2006, when local authorities were provided with additional funding to e-enable their generic services. Applications

for building and planning permits were also one of the core public service on-line applications identified as a priority by the European Commission.

9.6.11 Although these activities have been focussed on planning delivery by planners, there has been less interest within local authority planning departments of mechanisms for joining up with other services to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of service delivery through one stop shops and integrated service delivery. Planning IT systems can be linked to customer relations management (CRM) systems to include customer tracking of their planning applications.

**Planning needs to be delivered through one-stop shops – to make it easier for the users of local authority regulatory services and to free up time for the professional staff.**

9.6.12 The benefits of using these approaches is that planners can concentrate on case work and dealing with development management and their work on the LDF whilst trained generic customer service staff can advise those seeking planning advice on whether they need consent. They can also check planning applications once submitted and calculate and receive fees. Many planners in local authorities still answer all these queries themselves and undertake this basic work. Given this it is not surprising that many planners feel stressed and beleaguered and yet some changes in the way in which they work could make a significant difference in their workload. This approach may also be one of the reasons that new planning graduates find private sector practice more interesting as a career path.

**Why don't young planning graduates want to enter the public sector? Management, range of work, experience obtained and pay? What would you do if you were entering the profession now?**

9.6.13 Approaches to promote more effective working include business process re-engineering, which entails reviewing all the working practices within the planning service and stripping away all wasteful processes and finding more streamlined ways of doing things. These approaches cover both officer handling processes and the use of IT, for example rationalising multiple filing systems, and encouraging officers to plan their site visits using route planners to optimise their time.

## 9.7 What do young planners think?

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9.7.1 The following questions were sent to members of the Young Planners' Network in May 2007:

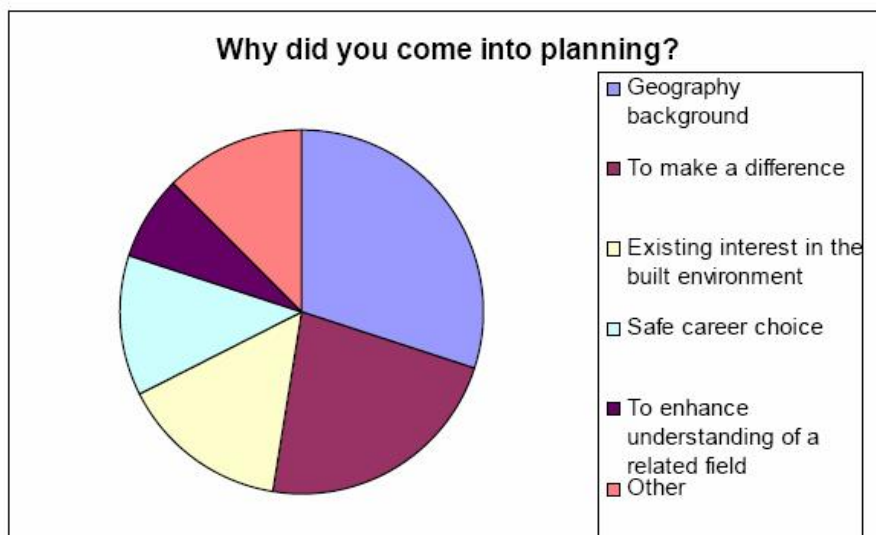
- Why did you come into planning?
- Has it fulfilled what you intended?
- What has been your greatest planning achievement?
- To what do you owe this success?
- What is the one opportunity that you missed?
- If there was one thing in planning that you could change, what would it be?
- Where should planning be in three years time?
- What must be done to get there?

9.7.2 40 responses were received and analysed to discern general trends and key messages from the young planners. 27 were received from planners working in the public sector; four were gathered from private sector

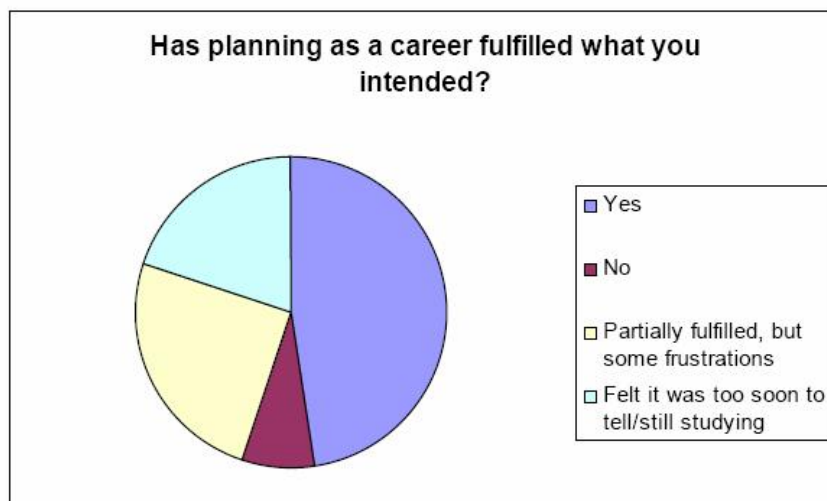
planners; two were submitted by students; and seven were received anonymously without any supporting information.

## 9.8 Reasons for entering the planning profession and professional fulfilment

9.8.1 Five general groups of reasons for entering the profession were identified. The most common was coming from a geography background, followed by the wish to make a difference and influence the environment that people live in. The other three are: existing interest in the built environment; perceiving planning as a safe career choice; and other construction and environmental professionals using planning as a holistic way to expand their own professional knowledge. See the chart below for more information.



9.8.2 Professional fulfilment gained positive answers on the whole and typical positive comments were that the work is varied, and that working in regeneration and urban renewal projects is a satisfying way to make a difference. Answers fell into four groups, as demonstrated on the chart below. Note that almost half of the respondents (47.5%) felt that planning fulfilled their professional intentions.



## 9.9 Planning achievements

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The majority of the respondents felt they had achieved something positive through their planning work and listed a variety of achievements. Reasons for success fell into three main categories: working for a supportive employer; dedication to achieving success and making a difference; and knowledge of planning and general education.

## 9.10 Opportunities

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Responses were generally focused on personal disappointments in the respondents' careers, and some respondents felt that time pressures prevented them from taking up all the opportunities they would like to explore. On a positive note, 12 of the respondents felt they had not missed any opportunities at all.

## 9.11 Changes to planning

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Many creative and emphatic answers were given to the question posed on changing one thing about planning, and six general areas for change were identified:

- Poor status and financial benefits compared to other professions
- Negative public image of planning
- Lack of networking and knowledge sharing within the profession
- Unnecessary bureaucracy and politics
- Issues with local authorities
- Issues specific to individual respondents

## 9.12 The future for planning

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9.12.1 General trends in the direction young planners think the profession should be going in the future were identified:

- More emphasis on knowledge-sharing and learning from good practice
- Planning at the forefront of sustainable development
- More community involvement and improved public image of planning
- Improved and extended e-planning resources
- Leading in shaping local communities and neighbourhood living environments

9.12.2 When asked how a better future for planning could be achieved, the responses were varied and even contradictory, with some calling for no more big changes and others calling for large-scale reform. Specific ideas varied, but generally-held principles for bringing about change included:

- Greater powers for planners and reduced bureaucracy to aid implementation
- Much greater level of RPTI involvement
- General policy shift away from an economic focus to wards quality of life issues
- More on the job training for planners

- More cohesive working between local government, the private sector and other relevant groups

## 9.13 Using investment to do things better – IT, process redesign, support staff

9.13.1 Most planning authorities use some kind of IT system to support their planning services but frequently these are operating at sub-optimal levels. This will mean that many of the features which are within the system are not used even where these would make the tasks of professionals and administrators much easier. Why does this occur? Probably because the training which accompanies the system is inadequate and of the wrong type. Most operational professionals benefit from short one to one training sessions whilst they are using the system whereas most planning system training is undertaken in larger groups long before the system goes live.

9.13.2 Other studies have been undertaken to assess whether the use of increased number of technical support staff could help professional planners be more effective. A study undertaken for the Office for the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM) in 2004 found that there were a number of reasons for enhancing the role of support staff in planning<sup>44</sup>:

### Reasons for enhancing the role of support staff in planning departments

Helping to address local authority's current difficulties in recruiting and retaining qualified planners

Freeing up qualified planners from routine tasks, to enable them to concentrate on more complex work relating to the assessment of planning applications and plan-making

Making greater use of currently under-utilised skills and abilities in the planning workforce

Providing opportunities for staff development and progression

The changing nature of some tasks

Source: ODPM 2004

9.13.3 This study found a variety of practices in different local authorities in the use of technical and other support staff. Where enhanced roles for support staff were found it was in a range of tasks:

### Where support staff are helping in the planning process:

Validating planning applications, including checking fees and the determination of appropriate consultations and neighbour notifications

Acting as the first point of contact for planning enquiries and the provision of general planning advice in person or over the phone

Dealing with written permitted development enquiries and minor planning applications

Data analysis and survey work

Source: ODPM 2004



9.13.4 This study found that support staff were deployed in several different ways and indeed each planning department was organised differently. Many local authorities had minor planning application teams set up within their development management groups. Other groupings of staff were those involved in validating and registering planning applications. Where these support staff were under the direct control of planning managers, then they were seen to be 'part of the team'. The support staff could also see some benefits in having these roles which could lead to better career development opportunities. Where the support given was in generic customer service and one stop shops, planners were much more sceptical about their roles and the support these staff could give, although the study only cited the views of the planners in this and no other evidence from the customers or studies in the actual increase in effectiveness where these changes have been implemented.

## 9.14 Improving planning management

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9.14.1 Improving the planning service also means considering the role, experience and quality of planning management. Like most professional areas in local government, those who take on the most senior posts have been promoted through various planning posts either within one authority or by moving around. Issues relating to the quality of planning management have rarely been discussed and although some initial planning courses spend a small portion of their time on planning management, there is little or no provision to support the development of management education for planners anywhere in the country. Some planners decide to take generic management qualifications including a Diploma in Management Studies (DMS) and a few take MBAs. However, in other professional areas, specialist MBAs are now emerging for managers in housing, engineering, school leadership and recreation management in addition to legal and accountancy specialisms. 'Shaping and Delivering Places: Effective Practice in Spatial Planning' (April 2007) has recommended that a specialist MBA programme be established.

9.14.2 In some local authorities, planning managers have been appointed who have no specific planning experience. Planning profiled the business manager of planning services in North Wiltshire in 2003 (16 May), who has a background in public relations.

9.14.3 Other issues for planning managers include the necessity to be part of the wider public service community and to be aware of the issues other service providers are facing. Planners have been seen to be increasingly isolated<sup>45</sup> and this will need some specific skills and development to change these behaviours.

It is clearly important for all staff involved in delivering planning services have a role in performance improvement.

### **The role of staff in delivering high quality public services**

There is a belief that staff engagement in performance improvement activities brings positive benefits in improved service performance, higher productivity, improved staff morale and staff recruitment and retention.

A positive association from staff being involved in delivering service action plans.

The provision of feedback to staff who have been involved in reviews and performance exercise was seen to be positively associated with CPA results

Some evidence that investment in staff engagement have led to improvements in staff morale and in recruitment and retention.

Source: The Role of Staff in Delivering High Quality Public Services (ODPM 2004)



## 9.15 How do planners feel about this?

9.15.1 Much of the concern about the role and status of planning has been generated by planners employed in the public sector. They have been feeling the pressure to perform better and are aware of criticism of their role in the press and from Central Government. Their views on their own position have to some extent been justified by the award of the PDG for the period 2005-2008 when it has been possible to demonstrate their needs through the provision of extra resources. The provision of PDG has varied between councils as has the availability of the funding for planning purposes inside the Council once it has been received. Some of the PDG has been used to invest in IT systems. In many places it has been used as short term funding to deal with backlog through the employment of temporary staff rather than to support a more fundamental review of planning services and procedures as a whole. The provision of the grant has also justified a more separate approach for planning and has encouraged a more hands off approach from senior managers.

9.15.2 Planners also feel they are not in control of their activities. A recent study of Planners at the Coalface states that:

(Planners) report that their prime motivator for being planners is a genuine desire to make a difference to people and places but there are concerns the profession is becoming bogged down in bureaucracy. Overall the majority (63.1%) of planners are not convinced the reform agenda helps to speed-up and simplify the planning system. There are concerns that reforms increase red tape and have not been properly resourced but there is also support for the reform agenda in principle'

From 'Planning at the Coalface: The Planners Perspective Survey preliminary results' Ben Clifford March 2007 Kings College London

9.15.3 This study shows that planners are motivated but also 70% of the planners surveyed for this study did not feel that 'planning is a well respected profession'.

9.15.4 This study demonstrates that there are considerable challenges in the way in which change is being managed within planning departments in the public sector. This also fits with the sense that planners are attempting to retrofit changes in the system – both the changes from the Local Government Act 2000 and the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 to their notion of the previous system. There is much talk about insufficient resources but little evidence of rethinking the planning task in the office. There is some evidence that the planning task is managed in much the same way that it has been for many years.

9.15.5 Planners have also experienced other changes. Twenty years ago, the planning service would almost certainly have been represented by a Chief Officer or head of department on the Council's management team. This is now far less likely as departments have been amalgamated into larger directorates. As planning has become more inward looking at its own regulatory environment and detached itself from wider council and community concerns, its role has diminished and it is more likely to have been included in a directorate of technical or environmental service with other professionals at the head.

9.15.6 Recently, the Local Government White Paper<sup>46</sup> has suggested that planners should be placed back of the management top table and this has been reaffirmed in the Planning White Paper<sup>47</sup>. However, this seems unlikely to be supported through the creation of a legally defined requirement (Planning 26 May 2007). In any case, there may be other ways to confront this issue. If planning is to move to be part of the place shaping and investment programme of the local authority, its activities will need to be at the centre of the local authorities concerns. However this does not automatically mean that a planner will be leading this unless they can demonstrate that they have the skills to deliver the place making agenda.

## 9.16 How does the media view planning?

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9.16.1 This is an under-researched area and a recent study of the media's coverage of planning between October 2003 and October 2004 may give us some indication of what concerns there are and what images are projected<sup>48</sup>. This study covered a range of national, local and professional papers. What emerged was a differentiation in coverage and tone which could be associated with the political stand of the newspaper. Clifford found that overall the stand towards planning was negative. At the local level, the press was more engaged in specific issues in what Clifford calls 'planning in action'. The other key issue that was covered in the press at all levels was that of housing provision and planning's role in restricting the supply of housing, although as Clifford states the period under review in his research included the publication of the Barker Review of Housing. Other issues that attracted press attention included wind farms and mobile phone masts as well as broader issues such as urban regeneration, retail development and urban design.

9.16.2 In his search for views of planners in the press, Clifford concludes with an interesting observation – that planners are largely absent from the press at national or local levels.

*All too often planners are simply not mentioned in articles connected with such big issues as urban design, environmental protection or sustainability. .... Thus in the national press the planners is either conspicuous by their absence or a figure of fun, and in the local press a technical expert occasionally commenting on particular developments.*

9.16.3 It therefore seems that although the national press has a view about planning, it has few views about planners. In comparison, coverage of planning within Local Government Chronicle has increased significantly in the period since 2006, as local authority managers and councillors become more interested in the place shaping role in their own areas.

9.16.4 Progress is being made by the RTPPI to turn this situation around, and this will continue, however the general media attitude to planning is still a cause for concern. We will have to wait and see the impact of the recently announced (1 June 2007) BBC TV initiative to commission "The Planners" .... "a fiery, funny and touching new 'fly on the wall' documentary series that will give viewers a unique glimpse inside some of Britain's local planning authorities.

**How far is the media's approach to planning, and professional planners, responsible for negative attitudes and a siege mentality?**

**What more could NPF members do eg to use press coverage to generate a more positive view of planning and planners?**

## 10. How can planners contribute more?

### 10.1 Planners as effective leaders

10.1.1 Leadership inside the public sector brings its problems and some now say that these are more challenging than in other sectors because<sup>49</sup>:

- Managers in local government have come through a professional career path and that 'people arrive at the top table with first –hand experience of only one area of business'
- Relationships between officers and members in local government are closer and all officers have to serve all members
- Setting out the common purpose is hard and (at present) there is less interdependence of the parts and no overarching goal although place is now seen as that binding factor

10.1.2 Effective leadership of planning and planners is an essential feature in creating inspiring places. As Professor Wendy Thomson states<sup>50</sup>:

**Leadership is widely held to be what makes the greatest difference...in local government, finally 'place' is being recognised as integral to the leadership role...place is not a new idea...but it does have a new emphasis in UK local government**

10.1.3 As place becomes a central feature of local leadership, the potential to create inspiring places will rise. Planning will have an essential role in this process but at present planners do not seem to be able to represent what planning can offer to their colleagues. It may take others to recognise what planning has got to offer and to demonstrate how it can contribute to place shaping. Can planners turn from their negative view about the changes to their system to one which makes them enthusiastic and sought after partners and team members? Without the leadership of the managers of planning activities this seems unlikely to occur. But this might need a new style...

*Whether in prescribing leadership qualities or assessing capability, these approached risk breaking one of the first tests of good leadership – the overrated tendency of telling people what to do...once you have learned how to replace one pattern of behaviour with another...once you have learned how to learn...it is relatively simple to learn which ones to learn.*

Source: Wendy Thomson 2007

### 10.2 Understanding the agenda

10.2.1 The change agenda in the delivery of public services is very challenging but has planning at the heart of it. Whether in the private or public sector, all planners need to understand not only the legislation which affects the delivery of planning but also what this means in practice and where this is going. Every planning regime has been seen to be problematic, until it is changed when there is an immediate wish to go back to the past.

#### 10.2.2 So planners need to:

Understand the wider context in which they now work

- Understand the place shaping agenda
- Understand LAAs and MAAs
- Work with other local authorities for joint core strategies and shared delivery where this makes sense in housing market areas or economic sub regions
- Engage with the wider public sector in the LSP
- Work within SCSs
- Ensure that there is a focus on delivery through development management
- Develop their skills in programme management
- Develop their skills in financial and development appraisals

## Use a wider repertoire of approaches to places and their challenges

- Develop partnership working strategies and move away from adversarial approaches in order to more efficient and create better outcomes for places
- Think delivery of a specific list of requirements
- In addition to speaking with different community groups as part of consultation, also think about what can be delivered for younger people, children, older people and so on

## Look forward and not back

- Live in the present – the past is not going to return
- Work towards a tipping point of change
- Recognise the cultural cul-de-sac in which they now find themselves and remerge into the mainstream

## 11. How can planning contribute to delivering inspiring places?

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11.1 Planning can help to deliver inspiring places. It is not a task that it can do on its own but as part of a wider team it is an essential component across all sectors. This report has demonstrated the role that planning has in delivering:

- place shaping
- an opportunity for people to contribute their vision of places
- the opportunity for investment from all sectors
- neighbourhoods with distinct and local characters
- integrated delivery of infrastructure across sectors

11.2 If planning is going to fulfil this potential then there are a number of issues which need to be addressed. The first stages in achieving these are in the associated action plan which identifies steps that can be taken in the immediate future. For the longer term, planning needs to be considered in different ways including:

**11.2.1. Changing the context and expectations of planning:** Planning can deliver more if more is expected of it. If Council Leaders, Councillors and Chief Executives understand the scale of planning's power to deliver at the local level, planning performance and delivery will improve further.

**11.2.2. Having clear political leadership from the Executive and senior managers:** Senior politicians could achieve much of their agenda by using planning to deliver it. This can be achieved in the normal mode of business as development management undertakes its daily task. Where the council and its partners wants to deliver its own programme of facilities and development, executive councillors can take a promoter role for the development, speak to the Planning Committee and underline its benefits for the local community.

**More transparent assessment of the added value that planning brings to the public and private sector**

**11.2.3. Understanding and externalising the value that planning adds:** Planning adds value but we never count it – why not? A transparent assessment of the uplift in value from planning consent both to an individual property and to the wider area would create a much more realistic understanding of what planning contribute to the character and quality of places and people's lives. Once planning gain and other improvements associated with developments are included – highways, design, landscape, restoration, and habitat – everyone can start to appreciate the added value that the planning process brings.

**11.2.4. Developing new approaches to harnessing and creating the market:** Planning can help to create and harness the market. It can contribute to the establishment of confidence and help to enhance the character of all areas.

**11.2.5. Creating local distinctiveness as a key component of success:** People want places to be distinctive and recognisable. Many comments about identikit high streets have appeared in the press over the last twenty years. Yet nearly every change in the appearance of places is regulated and controlled by planning. Corporate identity and branding for retailers is important but there are also many examples in historic environments which demonstrate that other approaches to fascias, shop front, scale and plot size can be achieved. Using local materials is also both a sustainable and appropriate approach.

**11.2.6. Working with partners and stakeholders as part of the change process:** Planning cannot work on its own. It needs its public and private sector partners to maintain and improve character and quality environments. However it can also help these partners in the generation of planning frameworks which provide some investment certainty. Partners also need help and support when they want to undertake joint development with other land owners or service providers (in the public sector). Planning can be proactive to support these joined approach approaches and helped through the process to a positive end.

**11.2.7. Ensuring clarity on what is to be delivered by whom and when and auditing this:** Planning needs clarity on local deliverables. It could be helped by a local 'shopping list' developed through evidence and probably not by the planning process, but by others. However, planning can be central to the delivery of many of these elements in local and area improvement that may have been identified. It can be instrumental in providing new health facilities and revenue funding to run them until they can be taken into mainstream budgets.

**11.2.8. Blame culture needs to be dealt with:** If planning's contribution to delivering places, created added value and an investment framework is recognised by those in the public sector, then there will be far greater pressure for it to deliver to its capability. There will be pressure to make it work rather than to blame it for being too complex, too slow and getting in the way. This will place far greater expectations on planning and what it can deliver.

**11.2.9. Need to move away from the adversarial system:** Planning thrives on its adversarial culture. Yet appeals cost time and money and frequently people believe that the outcome is sub optimal in comparison with a negotiated outcome. How can this change? One approach is the development team approach and another is pre-applications advice. But both of these need to be undertaken in good faith. Some way of taking these processes into account when considering planning applications and at present this is still too uncertain. Greater transparency of planning gain requirements for localities should also make the development process easier. Applicants will be able to identify their contributions at an early stage and cost them into their development appraisals. This will need a major change for the private sector. Many professional lives are founded on the adversarial system. Can this energy be used to achieve more positive outcomes?

**11.2 10. Should be planning re-branded?** Would planning's contribution be more successful if it were re-branded? Just as market failure has espoused the tools of planning and utilised them as part of the regeneration repertoire, would mainstream planning be better in a place shaping activity? If planning cannot deliver through the tools that it has in the 2004 Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act and the changes proposed in the Planning White Paper, this may be a serious option.

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<sup>1</sup> *Planning for a Sustainable Future* Planning White Paper, (London: CLG, 2007); Sub National Review of Economic Development and Regeneration, (London: HMT, 2007); *Quality and Choice: A Decent Home for All The Way forward for Housing*, Housing Green Paper (London: CLG, 2007)

<sup>2</sup> *National Prosperity, local choice and civic engagement: a new partnership between central and local government for the 21<sup>st</sup> century* Sir Michael Lyons (London: HMT, 2006)

<sup>3</sup> *Planning Together* (London: CLG, 2007) ; *Places Matter* (London: CLG, 2007); The Budget, (London: HMT, 2007)

<sup>4</sup> *Strong and Prosperous Communities*, vols 1 and 2, Local Government White Paper (London: CLG, 2006); Planning White Paper 2007 *op cit*

<sup>5</sup> Sub National Review 2007 *op cit*

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