

Briefing Note

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Introduction

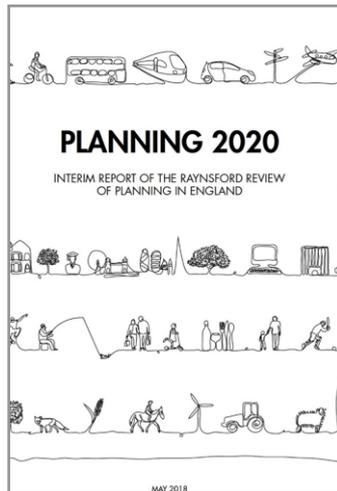
The Rt. Hon Nick Raynsford on behalf of The Town and Country Planning Association has prepared an interim report on the Planning System in the UK.

Mr Raynsford and his selected task force began work on this document in May 2017. They set out to conduct an appraisal of the current planning system and what will be expected of the system by 2020 to enable it to be heralded as positive and successful. The former housing minister believes that the current system is “not fit for purpose” and deregulation of the system has led to poor-quality outcomes for people.

This interim report seeks to highlight the key issues afflicting the current planning system and promote debate about the future of the planning system in England.

The report offers a series of nine propositions, with a means of implementation, which should form the building blocks of the planning system. These propositions are set out in further detail below.

The next steps are for the Government to remediate the findings of the report, seeking solutions to the identified issues raised with the planning system whilst furthering what has been deemed to be successful. The full version of the interim report is anticipated in autumn 2018.



Propositions

1 – Planning in the public interest

The report identifies and endorses the view that the planning system was designed to regulate the market to achieve long-term public interests surrounding sustainable development. It suggests that there is both an evidenced and justified requirement for the regulation of land and the built environment and that this justification is based on the markets current inability to deliver to the public’s needs. This is also coupled by the fact that any application with lasting impacts on both people and places is subjected to democratic accountability that goes beyond the individual property.

2 – Planning with a purpose

The practice of planning is meant to improve the quality of life of people whilst creating attracting places; however, this ideology has been diluted somewhat due to an absence of legal structure and a lack of clarity. The report suggests that a “meaningful” objective focused on sustainable delivery and which sets detail for the purpose of planning, should form the basis of policy going forward.

3 – A powerful, people-centered planning system

Any system that is touted must be capable of coping with the interrelationships between both people and place. Sufficient regulatory powers need to be granted to ensure that cohesive communities are formed along with developments that will grow alongside climate change. The overall aim is to deliver a plan-led system, which works for all parties.

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4 – A new covenant for community participation

Currently there is a large division between the people and the planning system, and going forward this division needs to be remediated through greater levels of transparency. The interim report proposes four areas which require attention:

- Democratic renewal
- Clear citizen rights
- New approaches to help communities engage
- New professional culture, aimed towards communities

5 – A new commitment to meeting peoples basic needs

As well as increasing public participation, a review of the rights citizens should expect should also be addressed with the following touted by the review:

- A right to a home
- A right to basic living conditions secured through minimum design standards; and,
- A legal obligation to plan for the future

6 – Simplified planning law

The report suggests that there is a need for a review of planning law which not only simplifies the process but allows the law to be applied at varying scales, whilst still capturing all of the key issues. It proposes to achieve this through a consolidated and integrated Spatial Planning Act. The core of the system would be an integrated framework from neighbourhood to national planning defined by four scales (neighbourhood, local, regional and national) with modern Development Corporations selected to deal with particularly demanding issues.

7 – Alignment between the agencies of English planning

Co-ordination between the agencies that have a vested interest in planning is a key area to be developed. The report suggests that greater clarity over each bodies specific role, would in fact aid in the delivery of development.

8 – A fairer way to share land values

According to the interim report a new planning system would need to devise a more effective means of sharing the land values with the three below options being touted:

- Specific large scale growth (Development Corporations)
- A Reformed S106 and CIL process
- An element of betterment taxation which is re-directed towards low demand areas.

9 – A new kind of creative and visionary planner

The report suggests that a change in a planners mentality is as key as changing the planning system. Planners should be implored to be creative with ambition, by offering real opportunities for the future. In turn this will require a reform of both education and ethics, which is well resourced.

Overall Conclusions

In conclusion the report highlights that the planning system is no longer capable of shaping places and we need a new approach with people at the heart of decisions and the system. It further suggests that there has been a significant amount of bewildering change to the planning system, with no obvious plans for this to stop. The report notes that the changes to date do not seem to provide the high quality outcomes the people require, leading to a planning system which is itself 'Un-Planned'.

The Review suggests now is the time to choose between further incremental tinkering or a longer term solution to reimagine and simplify the planning system. The nine propositions are the first step in moving towards a longer term solution, with the key point being that whatever system is implemented it needs to be effective in managing future developments that are approved via consensus.