



Planning 2020 in Practice

**A Councillors' Guide to Implementing
the Raynsford Review of Planning in England**



September 2019

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The Raynsford Review team is made up of the Review Chair, Nick Raynsford, and the TCPA staff team, led by Dr Hugh Ellis, Director of Policy, with support from Jessie Fieth and Sneha Pednekar.

Members of the Raynsford Review Task Force

Rt Hon. Nick Raynsford, Chair

Maria Adebowale-Schwarte, Founding Director, Living Space Project

Julia Foster, Managing Partner, David Lock Associates

Kate Henderson, Chief Executive, National Housing Federation

Fiona Howie, Chief Executive, TCPA

Lord Kerslake, President-Elect, Local Government Association; Chair, Peabody; and former Head of the Civil Service

Professor Yvonne Rydin, Professor of Planning, Environment and Public Policy, Bartlett School of Planning, University College London

Chris Shepley CBE, Consultant and former Chief Planning Inspector

Aranvir Singh Gawera, Planner, Leicester City Council

Matt Thomson, Head of Land Use & Planning, Campaign to Protect Rural England

William Upton, Barrister, Six Pump Court

Pam Warhurst CBE, Founder, Incredible Edible; and Chair, Pennine Prospects

Finn Williams, Chief Executive Officer and Co-founder, Public Practice

Foreword

The Raynsford Review of Planning in England provides a roadmap for remaking the English planning system to deliver the outcomes that the country needs and deserves. It calls for a simpler, fairer and more transparent system, focused on delivering the high-quality and sustainable places in which we all aspire to live and work.

This system must be founded in strong democratic accountability, it must work in the public interest, and it must enable positive, people-centred planning capable of tackling the complex and urgent challenges that we increasingly face.

Delivering this root-and-branch review of the planning system will not be easy, and reform will not be instant. Many of the recommendations in the Raynsford Review report require concerted and co-ordinated action across national government, the built environment professions, and educational institutions. Some recommendations are, however, within the gift of local government to act on now. We do not need to wait to put the Raynsford Review into action. Faced with emergencies including housing need and climate change, we cannot afford to wait.

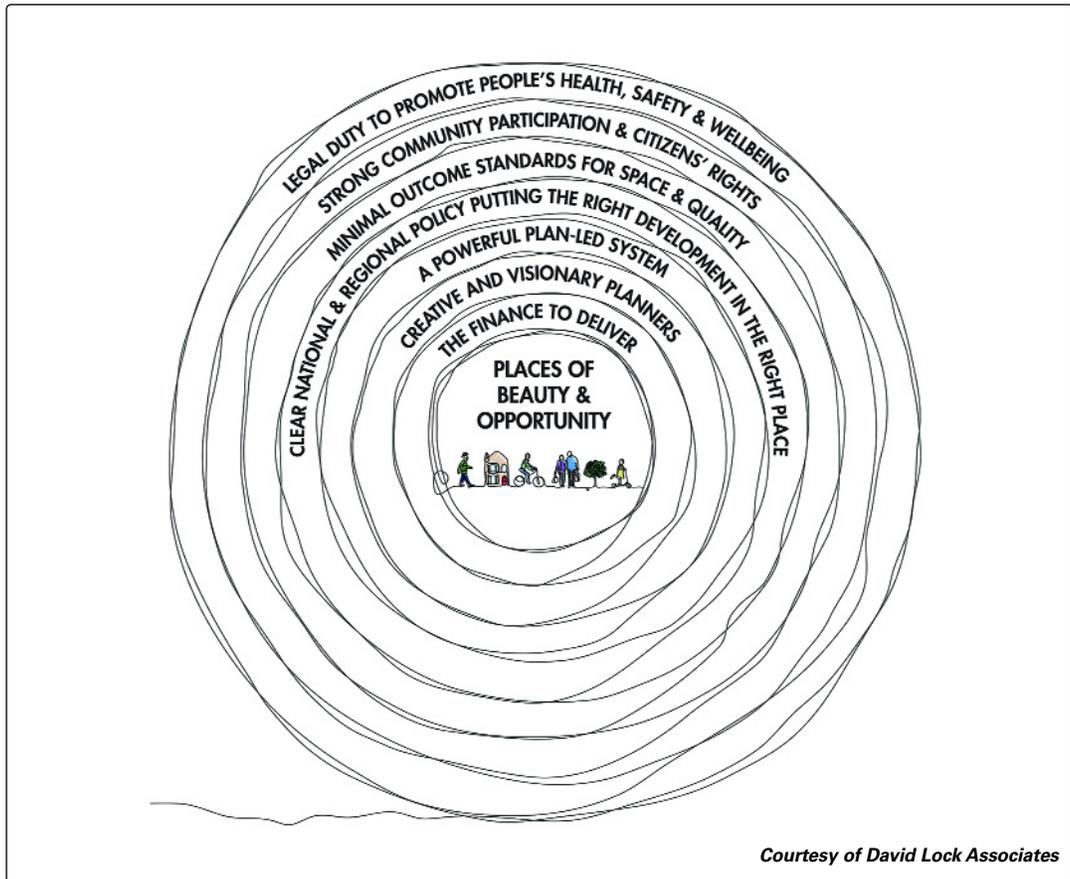
Planning connects every function of local government, from housing, employment and infrastructure to wellbeing and learning, and it brings social, economic and environmental benefit to communities. It is the most powerful tool that local authorities have to proactively shape the future of a place. Equally, local authorities play a fundamental role in shaping and delivering the planning system.

Local authorities across the country are already starting to show what a better planning system could look like at a local level. Through bold leadership, and exemplary plan-making, place-making and housebuilding, local authorities are delivering good outcomes for communities despite the challenging context. This guide is designed to support councillors in going further towards putting the Raynsford Review into practice. Ultimately, there is no better way of making the case for further reforms than proving the positive difference that better planning can make to people's lives.

Nick Raynsford
President of the TCPA



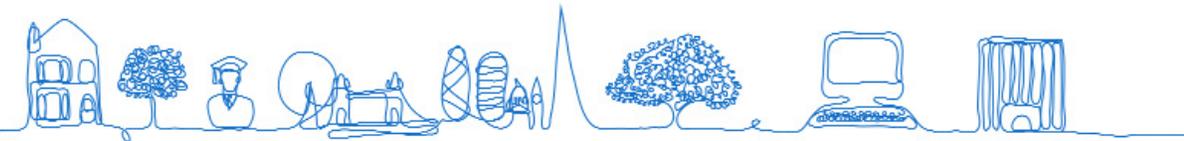
Background



Remaking English planning – the interwoven elements of delivering healthy, prosperous and beautiful places

The English planning system is failing to meet the needs of those it is designed to serve. It is also failing to meet the challenges that our

country faces, including the need to address the inequalities between different places and people, the serious consequences of climate change,



and the need to accommodate significant population growth in good-quality healthy homes and sustainable communities.

The lack of new homes to meet people's needs has prompted a seriously misconceived policy response in the form of the deregulated conversion of former industrial and commercial buildings to housing. The changes have meant that homes are being created without meeting the basic standards which would otherwise be required, creating the real and alarming prospect of a new generation of slums.

This is the background to the decision taken early in 2017 by the Town and Country Planning Association (TCPA) to commission an independent review of planning in England. The Review, which was chaired by former Housing and Planning Minister Nick Raynsford, set an ambitious agenda of making a comprehensive assessment of the operation and effectiveness

of current arrangements, to inform evidence-based proposals for reform.

The Review was launched in summer 2017 with a call for evidence, followed by an extensive programme of consultation covering all regions of the country and involving a substantial number of thematic seminars and roundtable discussions, and engaging a wide range of organisations and interest groups. This informed the publication of an Interim Report¹ in May 2018, which set out ten propositions that should underpin a new, fairer and more effective planning system.

Following a further consultation, the Raynsford Review Final Report² was published in late 2018, containing 24 recommendations for the comprehensive reform of planning in England. These interlocking measures were designed to transform our system to make it both efficient and focused on the wellbeing of people and communities.

Notes

- 1 *Planning 2020 – Interim Report of the Raynsford Review of Planning in England*. TCPA, May 2018.
<https://www.tcpa.org.uk/Handlers/Download.ashx?IDMF=8c619109-a721-4efc-8eac-c9ba8ecee4b5>
- 2 *Planning 2020 – Final Report of the Raynsford Review of Planning in England*. TCPA, Nov. 2018.
<https://www.tcpa.org.uk/Handlers/Download.ashx?IDMF=30864427-d8dc-4b0b-88ed-c6e0f08c0edd>



Taking action at the local level

Comprehensive implementation of the Raynsford Review recommendations will require national level action by government. The TCPA is taking forward this effort through a campaign for new national housing standards, to be set through a Healthy Homes Act.³ But faced with emergencies including housing need and climate change we

cannot afford to wait. Local government has a powerful role to play in delivering change, and we encourage all English local planning authorities to take the urgently needed actions put forward in this guide – outlined on the next page and considered individually in greater detail on pages 6-12.

Note

3 See the TCPA's 'Healthy Homes Act' webpage, at <https://www.tcpa.org.uk/healthy-homes-act>



Actions in outline

Action 1

Declare a commitment to plan positively to promote the long-term sustainable development of the local area and the health, safety and wellbeing of individuals. This includes planning to deliver decent and affordable homes for all.

Action 2

State and uphold minimum standards of development to ensure people's health, safety and wellbeing.

Action 3

Place people at the centre of plan-making, and Local Plans at the centre of decision-making.

Action 4

Take an active role in delivering new places and homes.

Action 5

Help transform the awareness of planning by making the public, not the profession, the primary audience of the planning system.

Action 6

Give planners the authority and agency to creatively shape the economic, social and environmental future of their area.

Action 7

Invest in attracting, developing and retaining the planners of the future.



Action 1

Declare a commitment to plan positively to promote the long-term sustainable development of the local area and the health, safety and wellbeing of individuals. This includes planning to deliver decent and affordable homes for all

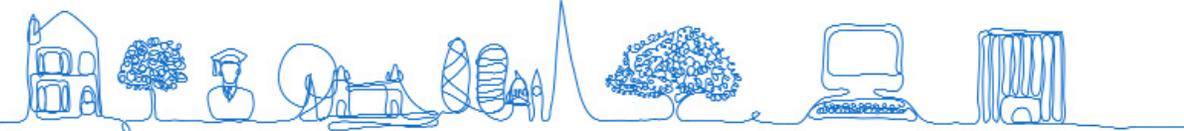
Local planning authorities should plan for the long-term sustainable development of the local area and to enable everyone to have access to a decent home in a human-scale environment that they can afford. This can be achieved by local councillors and planning authorities declaring a clear commitment to plan positively for sustainable development and for high-quality and genuinely affordable homes for all.

Local authorities are already subject to housing duties in relation to issues such as homelessness. Yet there is no duty on local planning authorities in relation to meeting housing needs. This is an odd omission given the government's focus on housing and the fact that planning law contains other outcome-based duties.

We encourage local authorities to make meeting the long-term housing needs of their area a core mission.

Given that places face environmental or policy constraints within their administrative boundaries, we suggest that local councillors and planning authorities:

- prioritise sensitive growth that meets local housing needs, especially for people with the fewest opportunities to access the housing market; and
- proactively negotiate with other councils over sustainable development opportunities within their housing market areas.



Action 2

State and uphold minimum standards of development to ensure people's health, safety and wellbeing

Local governments should consider the publication of corporate documents which provide greater clarity on the tools that councils use to shape the quality of places and protect people's health, safety and wellbeing. These standards should include minimum requirements and guidance for residential development in relation to:

- health and wellbeing, including noise pollution, natural light and fire safety issues not addressed in building regulations;
- internal space standards, including room sizes and storage;
- external space standards related to the type of development;
- accessibility standards;
- energy performance;
- standards of access to green and play space; and
- resilience measures, including sustainable urban drainage systems and measures to promote urban cooling.

Relevant departments include:

- **Planning** – local and strategic plan policy, and optional national standards on space, accessibility and water efficiency;
- **Building Control** – building regulations, focused on building fabric, structure, and layout;
- **Housing Licensing** – requirements for shared accommodation, such as licensed houses in multiple occupation (licensed HMOs);
- **Estates and Property** – the promotion of standards on council-owned properties and on the sale of council-owned land/property;
- **Public Health** – the local health and wellbeing context for the need for minimum standards, and the impact of poor-quality development; and
- **Environment and Sustainability** – standards to help meet the council's climate emergency objectives.



Action 3

Place people at the centre of plan-making, and Local Plans at the centre of decision-making

The local development plan should be an effective and powerful statement of how a community will develop over the long term. It should command the confidence of all sectors by being the product of participative co-creation between local authorities, communities and the wider development sector, all of whom are vital to good place-making. It should provide the forum for synthesising local strategies and giving them practical expression through action in the built and natural environment. The plan should be sovereign, not just for those applying for permission for development but for the community, local authority and politicians who have adopted it. Making decisions contrary to plan should be much more carefully justified than at present.

Local planning authorities should commit to preparing a people-centred plan. Local Plans

must provide a holistic and integrated vision for the future, on matters ranging from human wellbeing to hard infrastructure needs such as roads and schools.

Section 8 of the 2017 Neighbourhood Planning Act already places a duty on local planning authorities to set out some limited strategic priorities, but the duty does not require any more detailed place-making policy. We recommend that local planning authorities go beyond this duty and commit to:

'identify both the strategic priorities for the development and use of land in the authority's area and policies necessary to secure the health, safety and wellbeing of communities and individuals'.⁴

Note

4 See Recommendation 3 in *Planning 2020 – Final Report of the Raynsford Review of Planning in England*. TCPA, Nov. 2018.

<https://www.tcpa.org.uk/Handlers/Download.ashx?IDMF=30864427-d8dc-4b0b-88ed-c6e0f08c0edd>



Action 4

Take an active role in delivering new places and homes

Making plans does not make people's lives better; delivering them does. In line with the Letwin Review recommendations, this requires local authorities to positively shape development by acting as the 'master-developer' to co-ordinate change in a timely manner.

Local planning authorities need to participate in council-led housing delivery, operating development companies, purchasing land, acquiring land through compulsory purchase for comprehensive development, commissioning work, and forming partnerships with the private sector.

The scope of this place-making role is broad and should involve a greater stake in energy and other utility provision and in encouraging stewardship models for long-term community

renewal. This notion of an active and positive local planning authority is principally a matter of resources and culture, since most of the necessary legal powers – from compulsory purchase to the general power of competence – exist, albeit in a fragmented way. Sometimes this means that local authorities should prioritise the delivery of public goods through development over the achievement of best consideration from the sale of land.

Success in playing this role will depend on action on other recommendations made here, on the status of the development plan, and on local authorities having the appropriate skills and resources. However, local government should clearly set out in policy an ambitious direction of travel that builds upon the recent relaxation of borrowing caps for local authorities.



Action 5

Help transform the awareness of planning by making the public, not the profession, the primary audience of the planning system

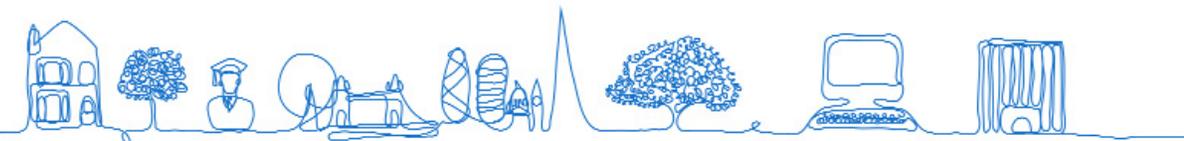
Local authorities should aim to ensure that the public is aware of the opportunities that planning creates to enhance communities' and people's wellbeing.

We note that many communities have little or no knowledge of the planning system or the opportunities that exist to make better places. Nor do they have access to basic resources to help them respond to planning applications or engage with the preparation of development plans. Empowering people with the skills to make their case has to go hand in hand with enhancing their knowledge of the challenges and opportunities which will shape our future.

New technology can help to transform the way that people engage with the built environment, by giving them better access to information and providing new tools to help create and express community visions. The potential of these new tools is impressive, but they will be effective only if they are applied in the context of clear citizens' rights and robust democratic frameworks.

Capitalising on these opportunities can be a major challenge, as local authorities have fewer resources to fund community development activities or local community hubs and knowledge centres. Funding has also been reduced for key services designed to offer help to those who cannot afford to pay for advice, such as planning aid. Resources for neighbourhood planning do exist, but this is only one part of the planning system. Local authorities should act to:

- harness the benefits of new technology in reaching out to the public to provide accessible and engaging visualisations of new proposals and platforms for dialogue;
- prioritise the inclusion of those excluded communities that have traditionally not participated in planning;
- harness the resources of planning schools to support community understanding and empowerment; and
- encourage staff to use entitled voluntary hours to promote knowledge of the planning system, built environment career paths, and public sector working within local schools and universities.



Action 6

Give planners the authority and agency to creatively shape the economic, social and environmental future of their area

Leadership from both members and officers in local government is required if planning is to be re-established as a vital, creative and powerful influence in delivering economic success, social wellbeing and a vibrant environment for communities throughout the country.

Chief Planning Officers played a key role in the development and implementation of ambitious post-war reconstruction plans across Britain, but their role has been seriously eroded over recent decades to a point where the majority of local authorities no longer have a designated chief officer responsible for planning. This process has accompanied a parallel change in the wider public perception of planners, from being primarily focused on creatively shaping the future economic, social and environmental wellbeing of

the area into a more restricted, technocratic and negative role of determining whether planning applications should be approved or refused.

The issue is not therefore simply a matter of status; it is about the ability to fulfil the visionary and creative role which is central to the message of the Raynsford Review.

To support a wider culture change in which planning is seen as a central and positive local authority function, local authorities should appoint a Chief Planning Officer. And these officers must have the authority and respect required to co-ordinate the enormous range of inputs necessary for the creation of an effective and visionary plan for the future of their area, and then to oversee its implementation.



Action 7

Invest in attracting, developing and retaining the planners of the future

Local authorities should act to ensure that they attract and sustain the creative talent needed to deliver on the ambitions of a renewed planning system.

In the course of conducting the Raynsford Review we noticed a tendency for some respondents to consider issues relating to the culture and morale of planners as relatively 'soft' and 'nice to have', rather than being essential. In reality, they are crucial to securing the ambitious outcomes we advocate.

Similarly, local planning authorities should reflect the diversity of the communities they are working for. Local governments need to work together with professional bodies, educational institutions and national government to widen

the pathways into the profession from groups who have hitherto been under-represented. This approach should include exploring opportunities such as the extension of apprenticeships and co-ordinating activities regionally and locally to better target 'hard-to-reach' groups.

There is also a crucial need to sustain and extend a culture of creative and visionary planning. This should include a continuing review of professional development and training programmes to reflect emerging as well as existing needs, such as the adoption of new technology. Similarly, in light of the importance of collaboration, planning departments should include – or should be able to call upon – other expertise, such as surveying, design, heritage, ecology, engineering, housing, and community engagement.

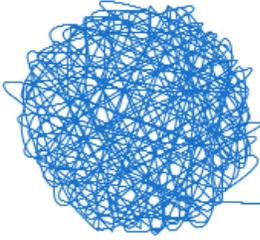




Town and Country Planning Association

The Town and Country Planning Association (TCPA), founded in 1899, is the UK's oldest independent charity focused on planning and sustainable development. Through its work over the last century, the Association has improved the art and science of planning both in the UK and abroad. The TCPA puts social justice and the environment at the heart of policy debate, and seeks to inspire government, industry and campaigners to take a fresh perspective on major issues, including planning policy, housing, regeneration, and climate change. The TCPA's objectives are:

- To secure a decent, well designed home for everyone, in a human-scale environment combining the best features of town and country.
- To empower people and communities to influence decisions that affect them.
- To improve the planning system in accordance with the principles of sustainable development.



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tcpa

Town and Country Planning Association
17 Carlton House Terrace
London SW1Y 5AS
+44 (0)20 7930 8903

tcpa@tcpa.org.uk
www.tcpa.org.uk