

RAYNSFORD REVIEW CALL FOR EVIDENCE - THEME 6: Effective implementation

A response by the Campaign to Protect Rural England to the Raynsford Review of Planning Call for Evidence.

Matt Thomson, CPRE. October 2017

What are the key delivery issues that can aid effective implementation?

- The focus of planning should be on delivering the agreed development plan, not just homes at any cost. Making this clear (and recent court decisions are beginning to help) should be the priority for a plan-led system.
- There is a need for a mechanism that incentivises the development of sites allocated in development plans and disincentivises speculative development. Local authorities and communities should never be punished for private sector developers' failure to deliver planning proposals.
- Councils, communities and public and private investors should be incentivised to invest in necessary regeneration where there is a lack of market interest - e.g. the northern gateway in Manchester where council has worked to bring in investment (£1bn for China) to redevelop large brownfield site.
- Stronger mechanisms to prioritise brownfield development before greenfield will help to ensure that new development is provided close to where people need to live and aligned with existing infrastructure.

How can the planning service be best resourced to meet current and future needs?

- CPRE has a long-standing view that planning is a vital service for the holistic well-being of communities and should be properly resourced from local and national taxation. Fees for planning applications should not be the sole or even the main source of income for planning departments; it should be noted that increased emphasis on permitted development reduces income from planning fees while increasing workloads in departments (such as policy and enforcement) that have no income from fees.
- Removing income sources from councils that under-deliver on single issues (such as housing provision) and increasing income for councils that over-deliver on single issues does not result in improved services.

What skills and expertise are appropriate for planners; and what does this imply for planning education?

- CPRE's forthcoming research on how councils identify and assess brownfield land provides evidence of need for better internal collaboration on emerging policy areas.
- Joint working between local authorities can help plug skills gaps, so long as existing resource levels are maintained.
- It must be remembered that the best planning departments are those that have a wide range of skills, and that these should not be restricted solely to the skills that RTPI-accredited chartered town planners bring to the table, although these are clearly essential, recognising the different skills of strategic/policy planning, development management, and enforcement. Planning departments need to include, or have access to, people with skills in ecology, landscape, architecture/urban design, transport, housing, heritage, surveying (especially valuation/viability) and public engagement, to name a few.
- It is generally accepted that the councils that perform best in terms of creating successful places often have a qualified planner in a senior management team reporting directly to the chief executive and political leadership.