Infrastructure Planning in England:

A Study of Local Practice

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

Acronym	Description
ADTNW	Asset Development Team North West; Highways Agency
AGMA	Association of Greater Manchester Authorities.
AMP	Asset Management Period
AMR	Annual Monitoring Report.
CAA	Civil Aviation Authority
CBI	Confederation of British Industry
CIL	Community Infrastructure Levy.
CLG	Communities and Local Government
COP	Communities of Practice
CPRE	Campaign for the Protection of Rural England
CS	Core Strategy
DC	Development Control
DfT	Department of Transport
DM	Development Management
DPD	Development Plan Document
DTLR	Department of Transport, Local Government and the Regions
EA	Environment Agency
EASPT	Environment Agency Sustainable Places Team
EH	English Heritage
EPISP	Effective Practice in Spatial Planning.
FOE	Friends of the Earth

Acronym	Description
FPT	Forward Planning Team.
FPO	Forward Planning Officer
GONW	Government Office North West
HA	Highways Agency
HCA	Homes & Communities Agency
IDG	Infrastructure Delivery Group
IDP	Infrastructure Delivery Plan
IDS	Infrastructure Delivery Schedule
IPC	Infrastructure Planning Commission
ITA	Integrated Transport Authority
LA	Local Authority
LAA	Local Area Agreement
LDF	Local Development Framework.
LDS	Local Development Scheme
LEP	Local Enterprise Partnership
LIF	Local Infrastructure Fund
LSP	Local Strategic Partnership.
LP	Local Plan
LPA	Local Planning Authority.
MIPU	Major Infrastructure Planning Unit
NDDD(HA)	Network Delivery & Development Directorate (Highways Agency)
NE	Natural England
NIP	National Infrastructure Plan
NPPF	National Planning Policy Framework
NPA	National Park Authority

Acronym	Description
NPS	National Policy Statement
NR	Network Rail
NT	National Trust
ODPM	Office of the Deputy Prime Minister
PAG	Practitioners Advisory Group
PAS	Planning Advisory Service.
PCT	Primary Care Trust
PI	Planning Inspectorate.
PPO	Planning Policy Officer
PPS	Planning Policy Statement
POG	Planning Officers Group.
POS	Planning Officers Society
RDA	Regional Development Agency
RES	Regional Economic Strategy
RPB	Regional Planning Body
RSS	Regional Spatial Strategy
RTPI	Royal Town Planning Institute.
RVBC	Ribble Valley Borough Council.
SA	Sustainability Appraisal
SADPD	Site Allocations Development Plan Document
SCI	Statement of Community Involvement
SCS	Sustainable Community Strategy
SHA	Strategic Health Authority
SPD	Supplementary Planning Document
SPiP	Spatial Plans in Practice.

Acronym	Description
TCPA	Town & Country Planning Association
TFGM	Transport for Greater Manchester
TUC	Trades Union Congress
UUW	United Utilities Water plc
UUAMT	United Utilities Asset Management Team
WEETF	Westminster Energy, Environment & Transport Forum
WRMP	Water Resource Management Plan
WWTW	Waste Water Treatment Works

ABSTRACT

Infrastructure planning is viewed internationally and domestically as the key which unlocks balanced and sustainable economic growth. The emphasis amongst politicians, economists and planning academics has, so far, been upon infrastructure planning of national significance and examining the political, financial and environmental impact of mega projects. However, major infrastructure projects invariably take considerable time to deliver and any positive effects can only be derived in the longer term. Infrastructure planning as practiced within the local planning system has, so far, been overlooked or considered of limited interest in the context of immediate national economic concerns but understanding capacity and capability for effective and integrated infrastructure delivery at the local level is an important part of the equation. Through a national survey of planners and interviews with key delivery stakeholders in the north west this study has investigated infrastructure planning in local planning practice across England. The findings provide evidence that local practitioners in the public, non profit and business sectors are becoming increasingly adept at identifying local and regional infrastructure needs, co operating on an inter-sectoral basis and ensuring that existing resources are utilised to best effect in their day to day practice. This untapped wealth of local knowledge, skill and expertise has great potential to complement and inform national infrastructure planning decisions and play an important part in stimulating economic recovery.

<u>DECLARATION</u>

No portion of the work referred to in this thesis has been

submitted in support of an application for another degree or

qualification of this or any other university or other institute of

learning.

This study is dedicated to the very special people in my life:-

Michael

My daughters, Brigette, Colette and Anouska

and

My parents, Margaret and Vincent Holt

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Context

Infrastructure is one of the most topical, important and multifaceted issues
confronting contemporary planning research. Since the start of the global
financial crisis in 2008, infrastructure has featured prominently in the
international and domestic media and has become an almost constant
preoccupation amongst economists, industrialists and politicians. In this era of
austerity, the concern to develop infrastructure has become closely intertwined
with the debates surrounding the management of economic malaise.

Boosting spending on airports, highways, bridges, schools and other
infrastructure has universal appeal. In his most recent State of the Union
Address, President Obama has restated the importance of stimulating
infrastructure investment across the United States (Baker & Schwartz, 2013).
Republicans and Democrats alike have declared strong support for
infrastructure development and all appear eager to see projects to regenerate
particular states, cities and districts.

The Coalition government in the UK has similarly placed infrastructure at the
heart of its strategy to boost the flatlining domestic economy, putting forward
plans to upgrade creaking road systems; railway networks and airports;
promote nuclear and off shore wind power; and develop broadband. The
concern with national infrastructure is equally intense on the opposition
benches. In October 2012, the Labour Party commissioned the Armitt Review of

Infrastructure to explore how to achieve improvements in institutional structures to facilitate long term decision making for strategic infrastructure planning and strive to forge greater political consensus (LGA, 2012). Domestically infrastructure investment is anticipated to be in the region of 310 billion pounds between now and 2015 according to Treasury updates to the National Infrastructure Plan (HM Treasury, 2012). Fixing the UK infrastructure backlog and boosting the ailing construction industry are key components in the government's strategy to kick start growth, stimulate economic recovery and address disparities in regional economic well being.

This concern to improve and develop infrastructure is not simply confined to periods of austerity. High quality infrastructure was considered an economic imperative for New Labour under the premierships of both Tony Blair and Gordon Brown between 1997-2010. Indeed, the strategy to tackle infrastructure funding gaps placed a similar emphasis on private sector finance and giving local leaders sufficient financial leverage to secure investment (Webber & Marshall, 2007). In good times and in bad it would seem infrastructure has been viewed, internationally and domestically, as the key to economic health and vibrancy.

Rationale

Planning research has been examining some of these questions. There has, however, been a tendency for academics to focus upon mega projects and hard physical infrastructures in an effort to understand their political, economic and environmental impacts at the national, international and global scale. Planning academics have been intently interested in the analysis of the New Labour drive to develop road, port and airport infrastructures in collaboration with business and the market since the late 1990s (Marshall, 2009). The latest research into infrastructure planning within the English planning system makes no apologies for prioritising and focusing upon hard physical infrastructures of national and pan European significance (Marshall, 2013a). Globally, single large scale projects such as the cross city tunnel project in Sydney Australia invariably attract keen research interest because of their intriguing geopolitical, financial and commercial implications (Haughton & McManus, 2012).

Infrastructure has also been studied at the local level, but researchers have not yet addressed the issue of local capacity and the capability of local practitioners to contribute to the national infrastructure strategy, to the benefit of all regions, in the light of the planned investment. As the literature review for this study shows (see Chapter 2), research into local infrastructure planning has mainly concentrated on local funding options and mechanisms such as planning gain, land tax and the community infrastructure levy (CIL). Infrastructure planning at the local level has also been entangled in the protracted debate following the introduction of spatial planning in England in the early 2000's. The English spatial planning narrative has to a large degree dictated and directed the research agenda for local planning and, as a result, infrastructure planning has

not been rigorously studied as a more stand alone issue. Attention to the local

does not necessarily equate to parochial concerns and 'minor' infrastructure

projects but has an importance in stimulating both local and national economic

wellbeing. But no better example exists to demonstrate the importance of

adopting a multi scalar approach to planning for infrastructure than that of high

speed rail; HS2 demonstrates the need for an integrated planning approach

which seeks to synthesise national, regional and local scale factors. Most

importantly, it is now being acknowledged that the potential benefits to be

derived from major infrastructure investment are only likely to be realised in the

longer term; greater attention needs to be given to understanding the role of

local infrastructure delivery in overcoming the persistent economic stagnation

which currently afflicts the country.

Overall there remains a rich pool of research opportunity in understanding

infrastructure planning as it is currently practiced at the sub national scale. It

was suggested as long ago as 2007 under New Labour that there were a

number of obstacles in the UK's infrastructure delivery framework in cities: Over

centralisation and fragmentation of infrastructure funding by Whitehall; weak

strategic coordination between the public and private sector; and skills

shortages in many localities (Webber & Marshall, 2007). However, these issues

remain to be more fully explored in the context of a host of policy issues; the

evolution of the English spatial planning narrative; the emergence of localism;

radical planning reform under the Coalition Government since 2010; and,

importantly, the latest quest to rebalance the British economy through public

sector spending cuts (Tyler, 2013). All these recent changes give an

investigation into local infrastructure planning practices added impetus and urgency.

How infrastructure planning is conducted at 'street level' now needs to come more centre stage. Researchers need to peer into the operational practices occurring day to day to understand how practitioners determine local and regional infrastructure needs, discuss the utilisation of existing resources and plan for future provision. Gaining an insight into practice requires a line of communication to be opened with local practitioners across all sectors. Direct consultation with practitioners is a technique which has only been infrequently applied by planning researchers; a fact which has been lamented in a recently published study of English spatial planning (Clifford & Tewdwr-Jones, 2012). A reading of the wider international literature concerned to examine the effect of austerity on urban economics in the US gives further importance to researching the role of local practitioners (Peck, 2012). Peck argues that the impact of the economic crisis and fiscal retrenchment is invariably driven downwards, making the local politics and the public sector the real battle ground within which the pressures and conflicts of neoliberal reforms are most acutely experienced by the public and practitioners alike. He describes a picture in the US of institutional degradation, crisis management and short term fixes which takes place at the local level and for which public sector staff, non profit and business interests are forced to take responsibility. Peck also highlights the disparities which arise between regions and cities, with some driving forward with innovative solutions whilst other localities struggle to survive and sink deeper and deeper into economic and social malaise. Such assertions have not yet been tested or explored in the English context and this study of local

infrastructure planning therefore provides a suitable and timely opportunity to start to open up research into these issues.

Planning research also needs to become more inclusive of a wider range of infrastructure planning issues. Some infrastructure issues have traditionally been bypassed, neglected and dismissed; considered too mundane or insignificant to warrant mainstream research attention. The maintenance and repair of infrastructure is a typical example. Only a few researchers (e.g. Graham & Thrift, 2007) have really challenged the academic mainstream, arguing that the seemingly humble every day forms of infrastructure can in fact be critical; break down and failure of apparently invisible hard technologies, for example, can have devastating and widespread effects upon urban life. The 'Everyday' has an importance which needs to be more universally acknowledged and warrants greater respect and attention from the research community.

Only recently has planning research begun to subject the burgeoning list of infrastructure typologies to broader investigation and greater experimentation. A Canadian study (Julian & Ross, 2013) interprets community infrastructure as 'social capital' necessary for promoting collaborative community problem solving in health, education and social services. Studies like this develop infrastructure planning into interesting, and as yet unexplored, new directions and set important precedents in focusing on the collaborative aspects of infrastructure planning, pushing the boundaries of research in this field.

This section makes the case that there is a need to understand infrastructure planning at all spatial scales and shows that there is a demonstrable need to undertake a study of local practices across the country to compliment and inform the wider body of knowledge about the national, international and globalising effects of infrastructure. It is important to push the boundaries of research in a variety of ways (Graham & Thrift, 2007) and provide clear evidence that the seemingly nugatory can, in fact, have a significance which extends far beyond face value; such a sentiment underpins the rationale for this study.

Scope of the Study

This is a study of the way in which infrastructure is addressed within the local planning system in England. The focus is on the practitioners and their skills - their professional discourse, day to day collaborative practices, experiences of and attitudes towards infrastructure planning - rather than particular types of infrastructure or specific projects. The individuals who are the key subjects within the research fall into two distinct groups; local authority planners and infrastructure stakeholders. Local authority planners with direct personal experience of infrastructure planning in all local authorities across England have been invited to participate in this study, whilst the consultation with stakeholders has centred on the North West region. The intention is to construct a national overview of local infrastructure planning activity and to complement this by drilling down into infrastructure practice in some detail in one particular region. Selecting a northern region, and targeting it for more detailed analysis as part of this study provides an invaluable insight into infrastructure planning in one of the areas of the country most badly affected by economic and industrial decline.

The methodological reasons which underpin the geographical scope of this study are explained fully in Chapter 5. It is, however, important to state at the outset that the thesis is built upon canvassing opinions of practitioners and achieving the necessary trust and rapport with the operational staff working in key stakeholder agencies. The geographical parameters for the study have been designed to secure a comprehensive overview and to provide depth of insight.

The study is designed to capture a specific timeframe in English planning between 1997-2013. This timeframe spans a critical period of change in the history and development of English planning, encapsulating planning reforms instigated and implemented by both New Labour and the incumbent Coalition government. Adopting such a timeframe means that it is possible to explore infrastructure planning within the broader context of spatial planning. But it is also important to move forward to understand how infrastructure planning practice is now being influenced and reshaped as spatial planning evolves, and Coalition planning reforms and the localism agenda are implemented. The last 16 years provides the opportunity to explore the recent past, present and future of infrastructure planning practice in England. The next section explains how the rationale and the parameters for the study have been translated into a set of aims and objectives to underpin the thesis.

Research Aim and Objectives

This section introduces the research aim and the 4 objectives which guide the study. The aim and objectives are explained and discussed in greater depth in methodology chapter (Chapter 5).

Research Aim

To investigate infrastructure planning within the English local planning system between 1997-2013 and to determine whether local authority planning professionals and infrastructure stakeholders achieve cooperation, coordination and policy coherence in their day to day operational practice.

Objective One:

To examine the existing academic, legislative and policy literature in order to understand the context for infrastructure planning with the English local planning system and clarify the role of the practitioners.

Objective Two:

To assess the involvement of local authority planners in infrastructure planning across England.

Objective Three:

To investigate the collaborative capacity between local authority planners and infrastructure stakeholders in the North West to determine whether engagement is being fostered and establish how this occurs in day to day practice.

Objective Four:

To synthesise key research findings and draw out implications for planning

practice and policy development.

<u>**Outline of the Study**</u>

So far this chapter has explained the need for a study of local infrastructure

planning, set the parameters for the thesis and provided a clear research aim

and set of objectives. This final section completes the introductory chapter by

providing a brief guide to the content of each of the 8 chapters and explains the

way the thesis is structured.

Chapter 1 - Introduction: The introductory chapter explains the context and

the rationale which underpins the study, and identifies the key issues to be

examined in the research.

Chapter 2 - Literature Review: This chapter contains a comprehensive review

of existing literature related to the central themes of the study, the English

planning system, infrastructure planning and the role of practitioners.

Chapter 3 - Policy Context: This chapter seeks to establish the current policy

context for infrastructure planning. The chapter examines the development of

the legislative and policy frameworks over the past decade, tracing the

influences of successive governments.

Chapter 4 - Conceptual Framework: The chapter draws upon elements of existing literature and the findings from a series preliminary interviews with academic and practitioner experts in planning to develop a conceptual framework which guides the progress of the remainder of the study.

Chapter 5 - Methodology: The chapter explains the research aim and objectives for the study and sets out a series of research questions which substantiate each of the research objectives. The second part of the chapter explains the research methodology adopted during the course of the research.

Chapter 6 - Empirical Chapter Stage One: The findings from the national survey of local authority planners are presented and explored.

Chapter 7 - Empirical Chapter Stage Two : The findings from a comprehensive series of interviews and group discussions with the staff in three key infrastructure provider agencies is presented and explored.

Chapter 8 - Conclusions and Policy Implications: The final chapter concludes the thesis by drawing together the key findings of the research. It reflects on the theoretical aspects of the thesis and the empirical observations made during the course of the study. It goes on to consider the implications of the findings for policy. The chapter offers some reflections on the research experience and proposes some directions for future research.

CHAPTER 2

PLANNING; INFRASTRUCTURE & PRACTITIONERS

<u>Introduction</u>

Infrastructure planning has attracted considerable academic interest over recent years, as explained in Chapter 1: This chapter explores in more detail the various directions research has taken so far through a thorough review of the academic literature; and provides the evidence to support the view that there are gaps in that knowledge and new opportunities in this particular field of study.

Understanding how practitioners approach infrastructure planning in their day to day practice within the English local planning system is the central focus for this study. This chapter therefore contains, at its heart, a comprehensive review of the international and domestic infrastructure planning literature. It is clear however that in setting such a research aim this review must also consider how infrastructure planning research intersects and overlaps with a much broader range of literature about planning systems and the role of practitioners. This chapter, therefore, contains three distinct but interrelated parts. Part 1 explores the academic debates surrounding the English planning system 1997-2013; Part 2 reviews infrastructure planning research; and Part 3 explores how the actions of planning practitioners and infrastructure stakeholders have, so far, been investigated and understood.

Part 1. The English Planning System 1997-2013

This part of the literature review identifies the various influences and key academic debates which have shaped English planning over the past decade. The section is structured chronologically and begins by exploring the emergence of the English model of spatial planning; continues with a discussion of the impact and legacy of spatial planning; and concludes by considering recent academic debate about the future role of the English planning system in the light of more recent planning reform initiatives following the election of the Coalition government in 2010. This section draws widely on the international and domestic planning literature in order to demonstrate the scope of the discussion and the robust nature of the debate. Explaining the English planning context provides an essential backdrop against which infrastructure planning and the role of the local planner and infrastructure stakeholders can be fully explored and considered in the following sections of this literature review and in the study as a whole.

The Origins of English Spatial Planning

The influence which international models of strategic spatial planning have had in shaping the specifically English variant is the first point of disagreement and dispute which emerges in reviewing the literature about spatial planning. Definitions of English spatial planning have consistently offered widely differing views on this point; some commentators argue that there is a close affinity between English and European models (Tewdwr-Jones, 2004; Jensen & Richardson, 2006; Tewdwr-Jones et al, 2006; Nadin, 2006 & 2007; Tewdwr-Jones 2008; Tewdwr-Jones et al, 2010; Hall

& Tewdwr-Jones, 2011); others have suggested that the international impact has been more wide ranging and point to the influence of the Australian and South African approaches (Morphet, 2009a; 2011a); a third grouping have strenuously disputed whether English spatial planning has any genuine affinity with European spatial planning (Allmendinger & Haughton, 2006; 2007; 2009). Despite the deeply contested views about the origins, characteristics and purpose of English spatial planning, it is important for this review to make reference to European literature on strategic spatial planning (Albrechts, 2004; 2006; Faludi, 2000 & 2010; Duhr & Nadin, 2005; Duhr et al, 2010) to aid understanding of the fundamental ideas which, at least in a tangential sense, appear to have exerted some influence over much of the domestic literature concerned with understanding spatial planning as a concept. The following section explains the ideas of Louis Albrechts (2004; 2006) to demonstrate how they have influenced proponents of English spatial planning; other European writing (Faludi, 2000 & 2010; Duhr & Nadin, 2005; Duhr et al, 2010) is introduced at relevant points throughout the remainder of this chapter.

Drawing on experience from business, planning practice and the planning literature, and observations of European and Australian spatial planning models, Louis Albrechts distinguishes between land use and spatial planning. Albrechts makes clear that spatial planning extends well beyond a narrow focus on land use and control (Albrechts, 2004; 2006). For Albrechts, spatial planning is a highly creative process; one which celebrates territorial difference and variety; encourages plurality and

participation through the sharing of information and aims across public and

private sectors; and is intended to develop and achieve long term visionary

objectives, whilst being simultaneously attentive to immediate and critical

short term issues. The workable construction of strategic spatial planning

developed by Albrechts is encapsulated in 5 characteristics which can be

summarised as follows;-

Fig. 1 Characteristics of Strategic Spatial Planning	
Integrative	Encompasses both vertical and horizontal integration. Emphasis on collaboration, co ordination and the building of working relationships which spans departmental and agency boundaries and policy areas
Visioning	Defining what a place could or should be in the future... Requires creative thinking about possible (or desirable) futures, and how to get there.
Action Orientated	Emphasis on implementation, and getting things done.
Selective	Focused on issues that really matter rather than overly comprehensive and all encompassing
Relational-annex-inclusive	More expansive than a singular focus on the plan, with the purpose of producing change

(Source: Albrechts, 2006)

In short, Albrechts suggests that,

> " Strategic spatial planning is a transformative and
> integrative (preferably) public sector led (Kunzmann,
> 2000) socio-spatial process through which a vision,
> coherent actions, and the means of implementation are
> produced that shape and frame what a place is and what it
> might become" (Albrechts, 2006, p.1152)

Albrechts discusses the roles and functions of the multiple actor groups who are to engage with strategic spatial planning. He argues that the proactive involvement of wide ranging stakeholder groups is an essential prerequisite,

> " ... Strategic planning demands a decision making style in which the stakeholders become more actively involved in solving policy problems on the basis of a joint definition of the actual situation and the sharing of interests, aims, and relevant knowledge" (Albrechts, 2004, p. 754)

Albrechts is also very clear about the role of the planner and the demands this would place upon them in making the transition from land use to spatial planning and changing from a technical expert orientated role to one in which they work jointly with others from all sectors to achieve shared objectives. He argues that strategic spatial planning has highly significant implications and consequences for the role, position and the skills of planners; it is the planner who is pivotal and required to "mobilise and build alliances" (Albrechts, 2004, p.752). The planner will be required to develop a wide range of skills and expertise which, " Go well beyond those of traditional planners, embracing value, communicative, technical and power concerns" (Albrechts, 2006, p. 1166). The implications of this prescriptive framework for the role of planners working within strategic spatial planning is discussed in greater detail in the final part of this chapter.

In developing and shaping his definition of strategic spatial planning, Albrechts fully acknowledges the complexity involved in detecting the emergence of spatial planning in operational practice. Strategic spatial planning is inherently based on the principle that there is no one best or single way in which it can be operationalised and carried out, it necessarily follows that it would take time to gather sufficient information to understand the diversity of forms likely to emerge. Albrechts also accepts that, on the basis of his own European and international research, the aspirational strategic spatial planning model he proposed was a long way from being fully implemented in 2006. He concludes that he could detect, "Some hesitant shifts towards the normative view" (Albrechts, 2006, p. 1149), but makes it clear in his summing up that,

> "Although most cases demonstrate a shift from traditional technocratic statutory planning (away from regulation of land use) towards a more collaborative and (albeit selective actor-based approach) they all still have a considerable way to go before meeting the characteristics I consider crucial for strategic spatial planning" (Albrechts, 2006, p.1166)

Collaborative planning has also influenced the development of English planning over the past decade. The work of Forester (Forester, 1989, 1993) Habermas (1990a & 1990b) and Healey (1993,1996, 1997, 2003, 2006) is critical in the development of communicative theory (Taylor, 1998; Watson, 2002; Allmendinger, 2009). The notion of communicative rationality proposed by Habermas (Habermas, 1990a & 1990b) is centrally concerned with the idea that civil society is the natural source of democracy and that democracy can best be protected and promoted

through the empowerment of groups at the local level and their ability

through dialogue to achieve consensus.

> " Habermas proposed communication as the most
> important element of planning practice. Interaction
> with stakeholders or interest groups, communicating
> ideas, forming arguments, debating differences in
> understanding, and finally reaching consensus on a
> course of action replace detached expert driven plan
> making as the primary activity of planners. These
> ideas are developed in their most sophisticated way
> by Patsy Healey" (Watson, 2002, pp. 29-30)

Communicative or collaborative planning is therefore fundamentally based

on how people and organisations interact through webs of social relations

as exemplified by Healey and extended by other contemporaries (Healey,

1993; 1996; Innes 1996).

Habermas argues that the manipulation of communication can be

overcome if the processes are inclusive, empathetic and open (Habermas,

1990a; 1990b). Advocates of collaborative planning argue that power

contestation and conflict should be viewed as integral to the collaborative

process (Healey, 1998). Collaborative planning and the communicative

action paradigm has, however, attracted much criticism for an over

emphasis on co operation; its failure to recognise the 'dark side' of

planning; its potential as an oppressive mechanism of social control

(Harris, 2002); and for its power blindness (Allmendinger, 2009).

Healey has written about the close natural associations between the concept of collaborative planning and social democratic government. She states,

> " The new social democratic government which came to power in the UK in 1997 was infused with an ambition, among other objectives to make the work of government more democratic as well as more effective and efficient, while pursuing policies which promoted social inclusion as well as economic competitiveness and environmental sustainability. Collaborative approaches to policy making and policy delivery were attractive to the new government in this context, offering the potential for improved co ordination, greater legitimacy and a more robust way to address conflicts. By 2004, new English planning legislation (the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004) required more active ways of involving citizens and stakeholder organisations in framing strategic planning policy, oriented by a new purpose for the system - sustainable development" (Healey, 2006, p. 318)

In conducting this review, attention has also been given to exploring a much wider range of other literature concerned with collaboration. (Huxham,1993; Huxham & Vangen,1996; Huxham & Vangen, 2004; Huxham & Vangen, 2005; Goodstadt, 2010) and other studies which examine negotiation (Fisher & Ury, 1981; Parker & Doak, 2012) and European network management theory (Hanf & Scharpf, 1978; Kickert et al, 1997). Huxham & Vangen argue that working across organisational boundaries is an absolute necessity in contemporary society. The research undertaken from the 1990s takes full account of the complexities, challenges and frustrations associated with striving to work collaboratively

across real world organisational boundaries in the public and private sector, including conflicting motives, power relationships, time constraints. 'Collaborative capacity', it is argued, is the capacity and readiness of an organisation to collaborate (Huxham, 1993). Ultimately Huxham and Vangen (2005) argue that collaborative advantage can be highly beneficial and achievable and the challenges are not insurmountable obstacles to collaborative practice. They conclude that collaborative advantage in day to day practice is something quite different to the idealistic, normative perspective, they argue that successful collaboration can be short term, intermittent, frequently the product of serendipity; and an altogether more pragmatic process when observed and studied in practice (Huxham & Vangen, 2005).

Fisher & Ury (1981) have considered negotiation techniques and strategies in the US, whilst more recently published domestic research has also investigated a similar theme distinguishing between adversarial and integrative forms of negotiation (Parker & Doak, 2012). This review has also investigated network management theory where European researchers have, over some years, built up considerable knowledge about the ways in which interdependencies between public and private sector agencies work. Kickert et al (1997) draws together much of this work, which has been dedicated to understanding how actors with different goals and preferences coordinate strategies (Kickert et al, 1997, p.10). These multiple strands of literature show the rich and varied array of perspectives which have been adopted to researching communication and

collaboration. The range of literature highlighted acts as an important basis upon which to develop this study.

Policy integration has also been considered in detail within the broader spatial planning literature. There are numerous examples of studies which have considered this issue; all of which have informed and shaped the development and understanding of spatial planning in Europe and domestically (Cowell & Martin, 2003; Kidd, 2007; Hull, 2008; Stead, 2008; Stead & Meijers, 2009; Vigar, 2009; Buser & Farthing, 2010). It is not particularly relevant to explain the content of the wider policy integration literature in any great detail in this literature review; other than to acknowledge its existence and the contribution it has made in the development of spatial planning as a concept over the past decade. However some of this literature has provided valuable guidance which has been used to inform the conceptual framework for this study (Kidd, 2007; Stead & Meijers, 2009). The content of these particular studies is therefore revisited and discussed in greater detail in Chapter 4.

The Emergence of English Spatial Planning

The introduction to this section makes clear that the use and impact of international views on strategic spatial planning has always been, and remains, a highly contentious issue amongst those who have written about English spatial planning over the past decade. However, it is possible to detect similarities between European writing about spatial planning and the development of certain lines of thought in the English planning literature.

Spatial planning was introduced into the planning system as a radical and transformative project through the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, and is encapsulated in the following; frequently quoted; statement:-

> "Spatial planning goes beyond traditional land use planning to bring together and integrate policies for the development and use of land with other policies and programmes which influence the nature of places and how they can function. That will include policies which can impact on land use, for example by influencing the demands on or needs for development, but which are not capable of being delivered solely or mainly through the granting or refusal of planning permission and which may be implemented by other means" (ODPM 2005, para 30)

A strand of the English planning literature shows how some academics have drawn upon European strategic spatial planning to develop and promote a coherent domestic iteration. For example Tewdwr-Jones et al, (2010: 241) supports this view highlighting 'Europeanization as one of three theoretical and political origins of UK spatial planning (see Fig 2)

Fig 2. Three theoretical and political origins of UK spatial planning	
Re-territorialization	The re-territorialization and rescaling of policy making
Europeanization	The European origin and development of spatial development
Integration	The push towards sub-national agency and institutional integration

(Source: Tewdwr-Jones et al, 2010, p. 241)

In practical terms, the utopian version of spatial planning set out by New Labour in their legislative programme has been translated into a number of aspirational characteristics which have featured in much of the English planning literature over the past decade (Fig 3):-

Fig 3 Characteristics of English Spatial Planning	
Feature	**Description**
Visionary	Setting out a clear, distinctive and realistic vision of how an area will develop and change
Wide-ranging	Going beyond a narrow land use focus to provide a mechanism for delivering sustainable development objectives by addressing social, environmental and economic issues and relating them to the use of land;
Participative	Based on strengthening mechanisms for community involvement to consider the needs, issues and aspirations of communities and stakeholders within an area to provide a basis for making difficult choices and to build commitment to delivery:
Integrating	An integrated approach which informs, takes account of and helps other strategies and policy;
Responsive	Flexible approach, informed by monitoring, that can respond to developments in a wider policy, degree of progress with implementation, development pressures and changes on the ground
Deliverable	Focusing on implementation, setting out delivery mechanisms, including development control, and identifying how the plan will be delivered with and through other organisations with the powers and resources to make a difference.

Source: (Tewdwr-Jones, 2004, p.563; Taylor, 2010, p. 199)

The writing produced by English proponents of spatial planning also generally appears heavily influenced by collaborative planning and policy integration (Tewdwr-Jones, 2004; Goodstadt, 2010). Thus, Tewdwr-Jones writes,

> " Spatial planning {by contrast} is an activity that can only be achieved through partnership and a successful spatial planning process may be achieved when all partners are committed to working across sectoral, functional and institutional boundaries to ensure the co ordination of policy and action in relation to the achievement of sustainable development" (Tewdwr-Jones, 2004, p. 563)

Spatial planning as a project was clarified and refined over time in a series of academic papers (Tewdwr-Jones, 2004; Nadin, 2007; Shaw & Lord, 2007; Morphet, 2009, Tewdwr-Jones et al, 2010). To its proponents, spatial planning was conceived both internationally and domestically as an all embracing project which would extend to all scales, sectors, agencies and stakeholders. Spatial planning had particularly profound implications for planners requiring fundamental changes in professional culture (Shaw, 2006; Shaw & Lord, 2007 & 2009) and in the role of planners within local government (Morphet, 2009a; 2011a; 2011b).The English planning profession was faced with the considerable challenge of reconciling the traditional form of land use planning with the spatial planning approach which was encapsulated in the culture change debate (Shaw, 2006; Shaw & Lord, 2007 & 2009). The planning profession was seen as having an important role, in 'educating' and coordinating vis a vis other stakeholders and agencies. Morphet (2009a; 2011a; 2011b) argued that spatial planning

transformed the role of planners in local government; she argued that spatial planning gave planners a completely new role more centrally integrated into the wider local governance architecture and focused on delivery,

> " The introduction of spatial planning has created a larger more central and important role for planning which is concerned with delivery. It has extended scope and has a fundamental position in the delivery of investment - whether public, private or voluntary - at all spatial scales. Its emerging importance will make it likely that it will be a more corporate activity, taken into the centre of organisations such as local authorities" (Morphet, 2011a, p. 260)

The RTPI and other professional bodies embraced spatial planning as an exciting and progressive project possessing the capacity to rejuvenate the creativity and quality of planning and reposition the profession in keeping with the 21st century. (RTPI, 2001; Upton, 2006).The RTPI defined spatial planning as, "Critical thinking about space and place" (RTPI, 2003, p.2). Similarly, the Planning Officers Society defined spatial planning as the desire to work creatively with the interaction between land development and other aspects of public policy, and a 'liberating' opportunity for planners,

> "Spatial planning is about an integrated strategy for the future of an area which is rooted in a clear vision, with commitment by all relevant agencies to its delivery" (POS, 2005)

Morphet's work on spatial planning and infrastructure delivery within local governance is substantial and intersects with this study in a number of different ways. Various aspects of her work are explored in more detail at the appropriate points in the infrastructure planning section of this chapter, and in the policy context discussion in Chapter 3. This section raises issues about the role of the planner which clearly overlap and are revisited, from a slightly different perspective, in the final part of this chapter.

The Response to English Spatial Planning

This section explores two key strands of the literature which emerged in response to the introduction of spatial planning into the English planning system. Firstly, studies dedicated to assessing the implementation of spatial planning are examined (Wood, 2007 & 2008; RTPI, 2007; Allmendinger & Haughton, 2007; DCLG, 2008 a). The second part of this section explores an alternative research agenda which was borne out of an increasing concern to examine the flaws and failings of spatial planning. (Gaffikin & Skerrett, 2006; Peel & Lloyd, 2007; Allmendinger & Haughton, 2006 & 2007; Newman, 2008; Inch, 2009; Allmendinger & Haughton, 2009 & 2011; Haughton et al. 2010; Allmendinger, 2011). Assessing the impact of spatial planning on the English planning system also generated a number of other studies which focus on the response of planners to spatial planning (Clifford, 2007; 2009; 2012; Gunn & Hillier, 2012). This aspect of the spatial planning literature is addressed in the final part of this chapter.

In the glow of the early rhetoric and enthusiasm which surrounded the

introduction of spatial planning in England, a number of studies set about

the task of evaluating the implementation of spatial planning. The research

as a whole found limited evidence to suggest that spatial planning had

permeated planning practice. Some studies (Wood, 2007 & 2008) adopted

a research methodology which focused on seeking to quantify the

documentary outputs by drawing primarily on planning inspectorate data

(Planning Inspectorate, 2009; Planning Advisory Service, 2009; 2010a;

2010b). Such an approach provided only limited information about the

more profound attitudinal changes which had been expected to permeate

practice but did confirm that local authorities were struggling to produce

LDF documents which met the expectations of the Planning Inspectorate.

Other studies conducted at the time were more incisive; The Spatial Plans

in Practice (SPiP) study for example was a major, government sponsored,

investigation conducted between 2005 - 2008. The SPiP project was

undertaken by Baker Associates in collaboration with project partners,

University of Liverpool, University of Manchester, University of the West of

England, Terence O'Rourke. The SPiP study produced several additional

thematic reports and a final report published in June 2008 (DCLG, 2008a).

The Effective Practice in Spatial Planning report (RTPI, 2007) was

conducted by UCL/Deliotte. The UCL/Deloitte research set out to

 " Illustrate what effective spatial planning looks like in practice" (RTPI,

2007, p. 53). Allmendinger & Haughton (2006; 2007) examined the impact

of integrated spatial planning across the devolved UK in England, Northern

Ireland, Scotland, Wales and London.

However, even these more rigourous and wide ranging studies discovered only a few early signs of progress in a limited number of localities across the country and there was a "wide variance" in understanding of fundamental concepts (RTPI, 2007; Allmendinger & Haughton, 2006 & 2007; DCLG, 2008a/b) Even in selected case study areas, these reports generally concluded that operational understanding of spatial planning was at an "immature" stage, across the spectrum of key players, with local authority stakeholders, " working in parallel universes" (RTPI, 2007, p. 27) and there was limited understanding and involvement of the voluntary and business community.

Infrastructure provision was considered as part of this wider investigation into spatial planning raising a number of concerns. The thematic study which took place as part of the wider SPiP project (DCLG 2008b) evaluated data from the main study of 25 local planning authorities who were known to have begun to engage to some degree with the new system, and 4 case studies of infrastructure planning practice, from areas where infrastructure delivery was thought to be a significant issue (Ashford; Liverpool; Redcar and Cleveland and Walker Riverside). The thematic study concluded that,

> "Some local authorities still have quite a way to go in adequately considering the means by which necessary infrastructural requirements will be delivered, by whom and to what timescales" (DCLG, 2008b, p.191)

Similarly Allmendinger & Haughton (2006) raised other questions about the feasibility of delivering infrastructure through the spatial planning system,

> "The non alignment of policy and investment geographies used by different public sector institutions; reliance on investment bodies which are not directly party to a spatial plan and work in different regulatory environments; different timescales which many of these bodies work to - planning is essentially long term, and investment programmes are often short term, linked to public spending rounds." (Allmendinger & Haughton, 2006, p.12)

The first part of this section has summarised early research into the implementation of spatial planning in England. As the evidence presented shows, it was widely concluded that the introduction of spatial planning was proving to be slow and problematic. Another strand of the literature produced after spatial planning had been introduced in England was concerned to examine more deep seated questions related to the concept and role of spatial planning. This trend towards critiquing English spatial planning has gathered pace as it has become increasingly concluded by academic researchers that the spatial planning ideal has not been met in reality (Gaffikin & Skerrett, 2006; Peel & LLoyd, 2007; Allmendinger & Haughton, 2006 & 2007; Newman, 2008; Inch, 2009; Allmendinger & Haughton, 2009 & 2011; Haughton et al. 2010; Allmendinger, 2011).

Much of the literature which has critiqued spatial planning in the UK, and in England particularly, raises concerns about how feasible it is for planners to achieve collaboration and consensus in the real world (Harris, 2002; Brand & Gaffikin 2007; Gaffikin & Skerrett, 2006; Peel & LLoyd, 2007; Newman, 2008) The theses offered in these texts are wide ranging, but all raise questions about the theoretical underpinnings of consensus based planning. Newman (2008) for example states,

> "We could see actors as failing to line up to the normative expectations of strategic spatial planning, or, rather as calculating opportunities and taking action that will serve their interests. These interests...may be perceived to be short term and with limited collaborative ambition" (Newman, 2008, p. 1380)

Allmendinger and Haughton have put forward one of the most comprehensive and systematic critiques of UK spatial planning as it was instigated by New Labour between 1997-2010 (Allmendinger & Haughton, 2006; 2007; 2009; 2011; Haughton et al. 2010). The work raises important theoretical, political and empirical questions about spatial planning and draws on the other writings cited above. The authors offer a detailed hypothesis concerning the rationale which drove the introduction of spatial planning into UK policy; challenge the intrinsic value of collaborative planning; and demonstrate that the expectations for spatial planning have inevitably failed to be realised in practice.

The contention is that the UK form of spatial planning should be regarded as "A product of a specific period of, mainly English, history" (Allmendinger & Haughton, 2009, p. 2546). As a result, 'spatial' planning is now highly stigmatised due to its close associations with New Labour (Allmendinger, 2010). It is argued that any suggestion of the close association with other European forms of spatial planning was simply a 'back story' aimed at giving credibility to the particular iteration which emerged in the UK and that spatial planning was in fact a cynical attempt to realign Planning and New Labour policy, driven primarily by the desire to achieve economic growth; that it was an integral component in the wider New Labour strategy to support the Third Way neoliberal agenda; and it was grasped by the planning profession as an opportunity for the profession to reinvent itself (Allmendinger & Haughton, 2009; 2011). Contrary to the arguments put forward at the time which promoted spatial planning as an enticing opportunity for planners to adopt a more creative innovative role, the authors suggest that, in reality, the motives were rather the opposite; that it was a pragmatically conceived strategy to suppress, control and manage planning which would destroy or at least severely disable the profession with regard to its regulatory function and its capacity to enable all competing demands to be heard and considered when making land use decisions (Allmendinger & Haughton, 2011)

Allmendinger and Haughton raise deeper theoretical questions about communicative planning theory and question whether the democratic aspirations which underpin collaboration have any real value in neoliberal societies. Fundamental to the argument is the issue of consensus. The discussion raises important questions about the idea that,

> "The underlying assumption of collaborative approaches is that a discursive, open and undistorted process will lead to consensus"
> (Brand & Gaffikin, 2007; Tewdwr-Jones & Allmendinger, 1998)

However, the idealistic and optimistic undertones of consensus within collaborative planning theory sit uncomfortably with the political and social realities of contemporary society.

The authors identify and debate important observations about the constantly shifting governance architectures and consequent policy flux which particularly characterise the UK political framework, described as '... the state's "restless search" for governance" (Allmendinger & Haughton, 2009, p. 631). Empirically, Haughton et al observed from research into practice in the Thames Gateway that this continual shifting generated 'soft spaces' where informal strategies and plans were being developed in addition to the more formal processes. (Haughton et al, 2010; Allmendinger & Haughton, 2009). The opinions of the authors have been corroborated by subsequent planning research (Hincks, 2010) into the interaction of housing and labour markets in the English regions.

In this work, Hincks similarly observes the impact of continual governance and policy shifts,

> " Spatial planning in the English context, is a multi-agent, multi-sector and multi-scalar arrangement. The implication of this is that the development and implementation of policy and the partnerships on which delivery depends are often 'sliced and diced' according to the focus of the policy agenda, the nature of the available funding, the culture and remit of the institutions involved in delivering the policy framework, and the spatial scale identified as being the most effective for implementing a particular policy or strategy (Allmendinger & Haughton, 2007). The impact of this 'slicing and dicing' effect is that policy becomes fragmented both vertically and horizontally, and this fragmentation is exacerbated by the continual 'spatial shuffling' of policy" (Hincks, 2010, p. 292)

The Future of English (Spatial) Planning

This section has, so far, reviewed the key issues which have influenced and shaped English planning over the past decade. Conducting such an exercise provides important background without which it would be impossible to embark upon a study of contemporary professional planning practices. For the past decade, English planning has been dominated by spatial planning but there is a very limited understanding about the extent to which planners apply a spatial planning approach in their day to day work, and there has been great controversy and debate surrounding the fundamental principles. The long term future for the English form of spatial planning is now uncertain; Haughton & Allmendinger have cast doubt on spatial planning as previously framed by New Labour but do suggest that spatial planning has value, from a wider perspective, as a 'world view' (Haughton & Allmendinger, 2012). The Royal Town Planning Institute (RTPI) continues to promote the principles of spatial planning, but seems more hesitant about the use of the terminology than was the case during the New Labour period. The fact that the Coalition planning reforms make no reference to spatial planning adds weight to the argument that the English planning system is at the very least in need of urgent reconfiguration. This section reviews the recent international and domestic planning literature to explore current thinking about the possible directions English planning might take in the future.

A reading of the most recent European planning literature reveals that other planning systems are equally concerned to re-evaluate the effectiveness of spatial planning as an approach (Roodbol-Mekkes et al, 2012). The Dutch spatial planning system has a strong international reputation: Nevertheless, questions have recently been raised about the durability and adaptability of the planning system in the Netherlands in the light of a constantly changing planning context. Roodbol-Mekkes et al (2012) conclude that the Dutch spatial planning approach has the capacity to evolve and adapt to changing circumstances, despite some concerns,

> " ... The future remains uncertain. Our analysis has highlighted weaknesses in the process of statutory reform. So far the general picture conforms with the notion of evolutionary change. " (Roodbol-Mekkes et al, 2012, p. 390)

Other European planning literatures (eg. Duhr et al, 2010; Faludi, 2010) also reflect an interest in exploring ways in which spatial planning might evolve and adapt to changing circumstances over time . These studies indicate a strengthening of emphasis upon policy coordination, coherence and cooperation and the role planners can play in developing and promoting these approaches in practice. Duhr et al (2010) explains the importance of sectoral policy coordination at the national level and across European territories, and the need to incorporate market and civil society interests around a common agenda (Duhr, et al 2010, pp.189-190). Faludi similarly argues for the "... the cooperation of the multitude of actors concerned" (Faludi, 2010, p.3).

The themes of evolutionary change in spatial planning, and the importance of policy cohesion, coordination and cooperation, can also be detected in the latest planning literatures published by planning academics in England. Much of the latest planning literature has been concerned, since the change in government in 2010, to examine the legacy of spatial planning under New Labour and to suggest ways in which the current system might utilise the more positive aspects of English strategic spatial planning in the light of the new proposals being made by the Coalition government (Hincks 2010; Hincks & Baker, 2013; Wong & Baker, 2012; Haughton & Allmendinger, 2012; Pugalis & Townsend, 2012). Exploring the legacy of spatial planning left by New Labour, and examining what can be salvaged, suggests that evolutionary adaptation is a route which could now be taken in reframing the English planning system. As Haughton & Allmendinger (2012) have pointed out,

> " There is nothing specifically contrary to the spirit and purpose of spatial planning in the Coalition's proposals. Indeed some of the themes and tenets of spatial planning, namely the emphasis upon collaborative processes and coordination across and between scales and sectors appear to be elements of the Government's proposals. And as a professional discourse and worldview spatial planning is more difficult to dismiss, particularly given the discretion at the heart of UK planning and the current emphasis upon localism" (Haughton & Allmendinger, 2012, p. 4)

Policy cohesion, coherence and coordination is a theme which continues to guide new planning research in England (Wong et al, 2012; RTPI 2012). For example, the Map for England study maps out the policies and programmes of government departments, their agencies and non departmental public bodies which have any form of implicit or explicit spatial component. Conducting such an exercise has provided powerful evidence about the dangers and potential conflicts which can be missed when policy making is conducted in a sectorally isolated way and there is a failure to consider the spatial implications of such policy making. The study concludes that,

> " A shared vision of the future and an understanding of the spatial implications of decisions-making are needed so that future development is not frustrated and is sensitively pursued for the mutual benefit (as far as possible) of different policy sectors" (RTPI, 2012, p. 437)

This first part of the literature review has explored the context for the English planning system between 1997-2013 and, in so doing, has explained the key influences which have shaped contemporary planning practice in England. Part 2 now addresses the issue of infrastructure planning.

<u>Part 2. Infrastructure Planning</u>

The focus of this review now turns to consider the international and domestic infrastructure planning literature. Infrastructure planning has attracted considerable academic interest over recent years; this chapter explores the various directions this research has taken so far. International perspectives are considered first, before the review focusses in on infrastructure planning in England within the context of the preceding discussion about the evolution of the English planning system since 1997. The exercise reveals the existence of new research opportunities surrounding local infrastructure planning practices in England.

International Infrastructure Planning

This section explores the various approaches which have been adopted to the study of infrastructure planning on an international basis. Individually and collectively, the different approaches summarised and examined here provide a rich and diverse research database to promote an understanding of how infrastructure is planned and delivered. However, as this part of the chapter will show, contemporary literature on infrastructure planning is predominantly focused upon understanding larger scale hard infrastructures and megaprojects. This emphasis on 'big' infrastructure is an inevitable consequence of the increasing academic attention devoted to exploring the connectivity between infrastructure, globalisation, economic development and neoliberalisation.

The trend towards understanding the 'bigger issues' associated with infrastructure planning manifests itself in several different ways. Some research has focused on specific infrastructure projects to expose the wider international political and financial implications; the investigation into the Cross City Tunnel project in Sydney being a typical recent example (Haughton & McManus, 2012). Much of the international research into large scale projects focuses on a particular form of infrastructure. Recent examples of this approach include a comparative transport infrastructure study of high speed rail in England and France (Chen & Hall, 2012); wind energy research in Denmark (Moller, 2010) and competition between European airports (Forsyth et al, 2010).

Research studies which have adopted a more interconnected approach to investigating mega infrastructure projects have also emerged where there has been an emphasis on understanding the political and financial implications for particular countries or territories. O'Neill (2010) has examined the impact of infrastructure financing on the urban economy in Australia whilst perhaps the most comprehensive research into international, particularly European, transport infrastructure investment, accountability and risk has been undertaken through a series of studies conducted by Bent Flyvbjerg (Flyvbjerg et al, 2002; 2003; 2007).

The key research issues addressed by Flyvbjerg are captured in the following comment,

> " The decade has seen a sharp increase in the magnitude and frequency of major infrastructure projects, supported by a mixture of national and supranational government, private capital and development banks. There is a paradox here, however. At the same time as many more and much larger infrastructure projects are being proposed and built around the world, it is becoming clear that many such projects have strikingly poor performance records in terms of economy, environment and public support...The physical and economic scale of today's mega projects is such that whole nations may be affected... by the success or failure of just a single project" (Flyvbjerg et al, 2003, pp. 3-4)

A more 'planning systems' based approach has recently been adopted by Marshall (2013a; 2013b) for the analysis of large scale infrastructure such as the major elements of networked infrastructure related to water, energy, transport and waste treatment systems. In this recently published research, the author has approached the study of hard physical forms of infrastructure through the lens of the French, German, Spanish, Dutch and UK planning systems.

The focus on planning systems is clearly stated in the preface to the book,

> " The reason for taking a national and overview approach has related to the interest in understanding the significance of planning systems and approaches" (Marshall, 2013a, xiv)

Marshall situates the role of European forms of strategic spatial planning within the wider political context of 'infrastructuralism' (Marshall, 2013a, pp.3-21) which is the term he uses to capture the escalating development of larger scale projects motivated by the domination of international markets and national economic competitiveness.

From a planners' perspective, Marshall argues the case for integrated strategic planning and restates the importance of spatiality, which he observes is frequently neglected within the broader political and economic considerations which drive particularly the more affluent western nations. The emphasis in Marshall's research is on the synthesising and coordinating influence which planning systems can effect, primarily through national scale planning. The research is not confined to particular infrastructure projects or sectors and argues strongly that effective strategic planning at the national level should act as an important counterbalance to the effects of sectoralisation, constructed policy zones and policy silos.

In the conclusion to the book Marshall states,

> " It is time to put the spotlight of planning work back on this national scale and press for much more adequate spatial planning competences at that level. At present, neoliberalising ideas are unfortunately moving in the other direction' (Marshall, 2013a, p. 265)

Marshall focussed the spatial parameters of his research on the national, with some limited reference to the city region, individual cities and local planning (Marshall, 2013a, p.74). He acknowledges the potential which exists in the level of local planning for more integrated approaches but does not pursue these issues in this particular study. The scalar focussing of Marshall's study primarily at the national is consistent with conventional understandings of strategic spatial planning where 'strategic planning' is the preserve of the national and regional level decisionmaking.

Marshall also fully acknowledges that he has carefully selected the infrastructure types he has included in his current research; omitting, for example, all forms of social & green infrastructure and information technology to cite just a few from the burgeoning list of infrastructure typologies. Marshall restricts the attention which is afforded to infrastructure issues at the local level; equating local infrastructure issues with 'the basic elements of urbanisation...such as roads and community facilities" (Marshall, 2013b,p. 122) and suggesting that the 'consumer end' of infrastructure systems is less problematic than the larger scale infrastructure features (Marshall, 2013a). The introduction to this study has already raised the point that infrastructure is a wide ranging term which is

the subject of wide interpretation; this particular section has considered the definition adopted by Marshall in his recent work; other definitions are discussed later in this chapter.

In summary therefore it is clear that most *project* based; *sectorally* focussed; and *nationally* centred infrastructure planning studies have been primarily interested in large scale hard physical forms of infrastructure. It is also the case that, the wider national and international, political and economic consequences of these infrastructures have been the predominant concern of researchers. These observations about the nature of the field of study also serve to highlight important research issues which have so far been overlooked. Infrastructure planning research has been largely 'fixed' at higher spatial scales and selectively restricted to particular forms of infrastructure from the expansive range of infrastructures described in research texts (Marshall, 2013a). Important questions emerge about the spatial impact of these large scale infrastructures upon the particular localities in which they are situated. Where infrastructure has been considered at the local level, the emphasis has also been upon the wider political and economic consequences (Raco, 2012; 2013). Mega projects are invariably designed, planned and approved at higher levels of national government and in the wider national interest; how does local planning respond to such limitations in the interests of local communities?

The synthesis of local issues with nationally significant projects has been brought into sharp focus recently in the current debate surrounding HS2. It is, however, unclear from the current research how local planners work to

integrate mega projects into local plans. What is apparent is that the integration of the large scale projects at all spatial scales, and all the issues raised here, have not been considered fully. This highlights new research opportunities which are addressed in this study.

Infrastructure Planning in England

Marshall has singled out the English planning system for particular attention in the context of his wider European research (2010; 2011; 2013b). It is important to make some brief comment about Marshall's observations about the specifically English approach to the planning of major infrastructure as his latest study, combined with other recent research (Marshall, 2011), constitutes the main body of research into infrastructure and national planning in England. Marshall explores national planning in the light of the 2008 Planning Act and examines the particular directions taken with National Policy Statements (NSPs); the Infrastructure Planning Commission (IPC) now the National Infrastructure Directorate (NID); and the National Infrastructure Plan (HM Treasury, 2010 & 2011). Marshall had concluded that England is distinctively more aspatial or 'planning lite' and has been influenced more deeply by neoliberalising factors when compared to the approaches adopted in other European and UK planning systems.

Infrastructure Planning & The English Local Planning System

The examination of literature concerned with English local planning and infrastructure is quite limited. Literature produced during the New Labour period, since 1997, has centred on two dominant themes. Firstly the concern to understand local infrastructure funding options and mechanisms; secondly infrastructure provision in the context of the English interpretation of spatial planning.

Research into infrastructure planning for the more 'minor' forms of infrastructure necessary for urbanisation, which are considered in the literature to be the main issues for local level planning, have so far been heavily focused on local funding mechanisms. Ennis (1997 & 2003) has examined the role of planners in negotiating infrastructure provision; Lord (2009) has focussed on the role of planners in developing the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL); Morphet (2009 a&b; 2011a) has interpreted spatial planning as a mechanism through which local government funding can be integrated to achieve more effective infrastructure delivery; and Allmendinger (2011) has been concerned with infrastructure in the context of development and land taxation. Much of this field of research is concerned with exploring how local authorities have responded to progressive public sector cuts, and centres on the need to explore public financing through planning gain or planning obligations from private developers to pay for supporting infrastructure such as roads, schools or health facilities. The various ideas for such funding have ranged over time from a development tax and more systematic approaches to planning gain through to a community infrastructure levy (CIL). Research on these

issues continues to be of great importance; for example CIL has been retained by the Coalition government but there has been little research published as yet which explores how the planning system has responded to the post 2010 governmental policy framework. Although the issue of local funding and investment is fully acknowledged to be of great significance, these matters are raised here to provide background and context for this study about infrastructure economics and finance. The emphasis in this study is however more centrally focused upon practitioner interaction and engagement in infrastructure planning.

For more than a decade, research into the issue of infrastructure and the local planning system in England has taken place in the context of the introduction of spatial planning through the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004. The protracted debates surrounding the English planning system since that time have dictated the planning research agenda. Infrastructure planning has been largely regarded as a tangential issue within the context of the controversies surrounding the English spatial planning narrative. Researching the linkages between infrastructure delivery and spatial planning was reinforced and given even greater impetus by the Housing Act 2008 under New Labour. Several examples show how infrastructure issues have intersected with the spatial planning narrative.

Morphet (2009; 2011a & 2011b) argues that local government funding of infrastructure and the role of local planners in this wider context provides the main rationale for English spatial planning. These views continue to permeate much of her more recent analysis of the period and are clearly demonstrated in the following comments,

> "The transition from an ad hoc system of funding infrastructure to one that is more integrated lies at the heart of English spatial planning" (Morphet, 2011b. p.127)

Morphet continues,

> " The role of spatial planning in the delivery of infrastructure was not made explicit and is only now emerging as one of the key features of the new system. It is possible to speculate that this role of spatial planning was 'sleeping' inside the system to be brought forward when the rest of the local public governance system was ready to embrace it" (Morphet, 2011a, p. 124)

Several other studies have also emerged which consider the interrelationship between infrastructure planning and the English spatial planning research agenda. These studies have, however, focused more centrally upon infrastructure delivery within Local Development Frameworks. (LDF).

Leonora Rozee (2008) has been one of the few to attempt to extend the debates which were being conducted around major infrastructure and economic growth and sustainability into the local domain in the light of the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) proposals and associated 2008 Planning Act,

> " Infrastructure is not simply about major projects, as physical, social and green infrastructure supporting all levels and types of development, whether housing, commercial, leisure, etc., underpins sustainable development. The importance of proper infrastructure planning is emphasised in PPS12... and further reinforced in the consultation document on the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) published in August 2008. This makes it clear that 'without public services and social infrastructure to support these [housing] developments - from parks and roads to schools and hospitals - we cannot hope to create thriving communities which people want to live in" (Rozee, 2008, p. 603)

In more recent work, Rozee has continued to argue that the consequences or effects of relatively small scale local projects can have much wider spatial implications (Rozee, 2010); a theme which has resonance in the context of the issues raised earlier in part 2 of this chapter concerning the tendencies for researchers to miss opportunities to understand the broader spatial implications of large scale infrastructure projects. In making her observations about the importance of infrastructure provision at the local level through the LDF process, Rozee also opens up questions surrounding the challenges which confront local planners and their role in infrastructure delivery,

"... partnership working, engaging delivery agencies and aligning both local authority and others' funding programmes to ensure that infrastructure is delivered alongside development" (Rozee, 2008, p. 603)

Baker & Hincks (2009) have similarly explored the practice of English spatial planning through the LDF process: In their analysis, they have focussed on the importance of infrastructure delivery for local plan implementation. Like Rozee, the work of Baker & Hincks raises the same important issues about the role of local planners and the need for them to engage more readily with delivery partners in their day to day practice if they are to be effective in co ordinating the delivery of the supporting infrastructure for housing and other forms of urban development,

" ... A key issue...is the need to understand the reality of undertaking infrastructure delivery under the requirements of the new planning system and to understand what opportunities and challenges face policy makers in the delivery of infrastructure" (Baker & Hincks, 2009, p. 173)

These examples from the literature show there was significant academic interest during the 1990s in exploring the potential afforded by spatial planning for English local planners to work on infrastructure planning on a number of levels; through the identification of new infrastructure funding arrangements in local authorities (Morphet, 2009; 2011a; 2011b); the integration of policy agendas related to economic growth and sustainability (Rozee, 2008 & 2010); and the need for local planners to work more proactively with a wide range of infrastructure delivery partners (Baker & Hincks, 2009). The role of local planners in infrastructure provision and

delivery has, therefore, been regarded as a subplot within the main spatial planning narrative. This literature strand is explained further in the next section of this chapter.

Part 3. The Practitioners

The third and final part of the chapter explores published research about planners and stakeholders as they are the key subjects of research for this study. This study investigates whether, and in what ways, infrastructure planning is conducted between local planners and stakeholders within the local planning system. It is, therefore, clearly important to explore what has been written about planners as professional practitioners and, in particular, how they have responded to spatial planning and the reforms which have beset the English planning system between 1997-2013. Although this study is primarily concerned with the local planning system and the role of the planning practitioner, it is also important to consider literature examining what is meant by an 'infrastructure stakeholder'.

The Role of the Professional Planner

As part of this study, a review has been conducted of previous research about the role of planners in the English local planning system. Some of this literature has been circulating as an academic resource for many years eg. (Lipsky,1980; Schon,1983 Sandercock, 1997). Although it is important to acknowledge the wide range of material available, this study has focused on just a select few of the earlier texts because they continue to be frequently cited in the latest contemporary work.

Lipsky (1980) has long since established that public sector officials wield considerable power and control over the implementation of policy in their daily practice. These observations relate particularly to situations where the policies to be implemented are especially complex, open to multiple interpretations or communication about the policy is confused. This observation has been linked to the wider research debates about policy implementation, policy conformance and performance (Barrett & Fudge, 1981; Pressman & Wildavsky, 1984; Ryan, 1995; Schofield, 2004). Implementation theories are considered more fully in chapter 4 as part of the development of the conceptual framework.

Pragmatist theory emphasises the importance of listening to the practical experiences of practitioners, to understand how practitioners learn and adapt practices through day to day experience. Pragmatists argue that such experiences should then be used to review, revise and evaluate establsihed theories. One of the main proponents of the pragmatist approach was Donald Schon. Schon (1980) has researched planning

practice as part of his wider studies and found that the role of the planning profession is itself complex in that it is multi facetted and diverse,

> " The institutional context of planning practice is notoriously unstable and there are many contending views of the profession, each of which carries a different image of the planning role...At the present time for example planners function variously as designers, plan makers, critics, advocates of special interests, regulators, managers, evaluators and intermediaries" (Schon, 1983, p. 204)

Schon's observations about the role of the planner have been corroborated and expanded by more recent studies,

> " The role of the planner changes … while traditionally planners were often seen as the regulatory, managerial and controlling middle part of the legislation-execution-jurisdictional triad, they are now called upon to act as facilitator, intermediary, or 'knowledge' mediator and broker" (Brand & Gaffikin, 2007, p.291)

Pragmatist theory also provides useful guidance necessary for studying the role of planners and their approach to the development of their professional practice (Schon,1983; Forester,1993; Hoch, 2002; 2009; Healey, 2008). Pragmatist theory offers a way to focus upon the learning processes integral to professional practice and stresses the value of investigating the 'messy world of practice'; these are important guiding principles in shaping the framework for this study in order investigate the realities of local planning practice.

All these studies are cited to demonstrate a long standing academic acceptance that planners can, and do, act as intermediaries and facilitators as part of their role in practice above and beyond the role identified for them within the context of spatial planning. These studies are considered further in Chapter 4 in developing the conceptual framework for this study.

Throughout this review, particular attention has been given to exploring literature relevant to a specific timeframe of English planning between 1997-2013. The literatures which have been concerned with understanding the role of the planner during this period are now explored in more detail in order to provide necessary background and context to inform this study.

The effect of the New Labour political agenda, and the efforts to mould and reshape the planning and the role of planners since 1997, has been well documented in the academic literature (Finlayson, 2009; Marshall, 2009; Inch, 2010 & 2012; Jupp & Inch, 2012) A review of this literature makes clear that professional planners have been subjected to heavy criticism in the light of the strenuous, sustained and determined efforts by successive administrations to reform or remould English planning over the recent past. Planners have endured accusations that they have been reduced to bureaucratic technicians (Sturzaker, 2011) and have been implicated in the failure of English spatial planning through the suggestion that they might resist the necessary culture changes (Shaw, 2006; Shaw & Lord, 2007). It has been strongly argued that reform has been a type of

identity control (Inch, 2010 & 2012). Recently, criticism of planning and sustained attacks upon it have been explained as part of a strategy to mould planning to better serve business interests and the cause of economic growth at all costs (Marshall, 2009, p. 2) and latterly presented as a neoliberalist attack,

> "...in a 15 year period (1997-2012) England has witnessed a remarkable five waves of legislative planning reform. On each occasion the discourse used by politicians has been one of a necessity to 'fix' the system on the grounds that it is an obstacle to growth" (Lord & Tewdwr-Jones, 2012, p.2)

This combination of heavy criticism, sustained reform and public sector spending cuts has prompted the professional bodies and lobby groups to leap to the defence of the people they represent. In response to government criticism of planning before the 2011 budget, the President of the RTPI, Richard Summers, stated that,

> "Planners are not the enemies of enterprise. They are not the Town Hall bureaucrats who obstruct economic growth.... The RTPI deplores the recent ill informed attack on planning and planners ... We were not alone in our anger... senior civil servants have also been outraged by the attacks on the public sector. Local authority chief executives, anyone working for a quango, the teaching trade unions, legal aid lawyers, and public servants generally have also come in for Coalition Government criticism" (Summers, 2011)

The Town & Country Planning Association (TCPA) has also given a powerful response to recent attacks on planners,

" The TCPA promotes the work of planners and is enthusiastic about the practice of planning... The original purpose... the 1890s purpose of planning..... was the transformation of the entire external fabric of society. We remain committed to that cause. Its about sustainable development, social justice, democracy and rights, and that kind of social change. It is not about delivering whatever government agenda happens to be there. We are, the last time I checked, independent sentient people as planners, with a strong social movement background and we should retain that.... What did we want spatial planning to achieve?" (Ellis, 2012)

The response of local planners towards spatial planning has been the subject of some specific research. Allmendinger (2011), drawing together some of this research, makes the important observation that,

" .... the feeling amongst planners in the public sector was that the new system was labour intensive, overly focussed upon process, under resourced and too complex" (Allmendinger, 2011, p.110)

Recently, Gunn & Hillier (2012) have also reflected upon the manner in which spatial planning was introduced into the English planning system between 2001- 2010. This research provides an important perspective on the power relationships between central government and local practitioners. The study was designed to, "... address the key planning theory and practice question of how new agendas travel and are adopted through the planning system" (Gunn & Hillier, 2012, p. 359). The authors selected three particular policy areas, following consultation with

practitioners and a review of the literature, to act as the key case studies for their research. The three issues identified were planning flexibility, evidence based planning, and infrastructure provision. The paper provides a very specific rationale for the inclusion of infrastructure practices in the study; Gunn & Hillier argue that, although infrastructure planning was initially a low key element in the reform programme, the topic became increasingly more important from 2008. This increase in emphasis on infrastructure planning in the latter stages of the 2000s prompted Gunn & Hillier to examine the implementation and practitioner responses towards infrastructure practices in detail,

> " Infrastructure provision as an idea grew in significance over the period, to become for some the raison etre of planning in 2009" (Gunn & Hillier, 2012, p. 368)

The study assesses the impact of the intermediaries who acted as the agents of change for central government in the education of planners and concludes that,

> "..planning reform was founded initially on ideas that provided spaces for negotiation for LPA planners in which they could be innovative in locally appropriate ways. However as LPAs struggled to understand and accommodate the new system, little was achieved on the ground. Well intentioned advice from intermediaries and mediators crowded into this space, making it highly congested" (Gunn & Hillier, 2012, p. 359)

Overall the study argues that planners struggled with the implementation of spatial planning and their ability to innovate was inhibited; paradoxically; by the " cacophony of advice being transmitted" (Gunn & Hillier, 2012, p. 369). This study provides further evidence, using direct consultation with practitioners, to demonstrate the highly prescriptive implementation style adopted by the government, they conclude,

> "... our analysis reveals a reform strategy supported by an infrastructure of materialities and discursivities which produced a hierarchical power structure of intermediaries / mediators (private consultants and quasi public agencies) influencing the nature and content of plan making, while local strategic planners often became goal-orientated satisfiers. Rather than the innovative, flexible spatial planning culture which central government originally intended, the reformed planning regime has become layered on top of pre-existing cultural practices" (Gunn & Hillier, 2012, p. 376)

This recent retrospective examination of the period also suggests a level of compliance and passivity amongst local practitioners, such findings provide an important template for further examination of practitioner opinion about the New Labour planning reforms.

Research dedicated to understanding the front line planners' perspective on spatial planning, and the impacts upon their day to day work 'at the coalface' has so far been concentrated upon the New Labour period. The evidence to support this view is demonstrated by two strands of study conducted by Clifford (2007), Clifford & Tewdwr-Jones (2013) and Gunn &

Hillier, (2012) respectively. Clifford & Tewdwr-Jones' work, for example, is based upon a comprehensive survey of planners in England, Scotland and Wales conducted between 2005-2008. This study documents practitioner observations concerning problems they experienced in enacting the 'new' spatial planning system.

The analysis of the role of local planners to New Labour planning reforms has, as the examples cited above demonstrate, largely centred on the manner in which they have responded to spatial planning per se, or their response to infrastructure planning as a subplot to the main spatial planning narrative (Gunn & Hillier, 2012). It is, however, dangerous to assume that the conclusions drawn from the research into spatial planning cited here provides an entirely accurate picture of the way local planners now work on infrastructure planning. Jumping to such sweeping conclusions, in the absence of any further research which captures a snap shot of current infrastructure planning practice, could be problematic. It is therefore reasonable to suggest that there is an unexplored gap in the existing literature around the way spatial planning might have become more embedded within local practice, and on the way local planners have subsequently learned to approach infrastructure planning.

Infrastructure Stakeholders

Planners are one of the two main groups of protagonists for the purposes of this study; but planners involved in infrastructure planning necessarily interact with a wide range of other stakeholder groups and agencies. It has also, therefore, been necessary to identify literature which helps to define what is meant by a stakeholder and to explore what has been written about planner / stakeholder interaction. Several research studies have addressed the task of defining 'the stakeholder'; Some of the definitions are quite a general in nature. For example, Carroll (1993) suggests that a stakeholder is any individual or group affected by an organisation; Forester maintains that stakeholders are those who, "make mediated agreements" with planners within the planning process (Forester, in press, cited in Metzger, 2013, p. 781). Legacy (2010, p. 2708) defines stakeholders as " those who will be affected in one way or another by the results of planning processes". Other literatures draw a distinction between 'organised' and 'unorganised' stakeholders (Leach et al, 2005). A more comprehensive definition has been put forward by Boaden et al, 1980 where stakeholders are subdivided into 3 distinct categories 'major elites'; 'minor elites' and 'the public individual' (Boaden et al, 1980 cited in Baker et al, 2010, p. 577). Although Boaden's study is over 30 years old, it has been usefully applied in recent studies of stakeholder involvement (Baker et al, 2010; Baker et al, 2011). A recent Scandinavian paper (Metzger, 2013) has considered the interrelationship between the stakeholder and the planner within the strategic spatial planning process. The study argues the stakeholder concept is fundamental to strategic spatial planning " the concept of the 'stakeholder' {has} a prominent position with regard to the

purpose and potential outcome of a strategic planning approach" (Metzger, 2013, p.781).

Metzger goes on to explore the interrelationship between planners as intermediaries and stakeholders, probing in some considerable depth the ways in which stakeholders have been defined and identified arguing that the planner in fact determines and controls who becomes a stakeholder. Drawing on Healey (2006), Metzger explains the ways in which planners control and manipulate, inadvertently or otherwise, the selection and involvement of stakeholders.

> "... a key task for the planner is to 'explore who has a stake in an issue (p. 269) ... conduct an analysis to identify the stakeholders (p. 260)... and make sure that planning efforts grow out of the specific concerns of stakeholders (p. 268) ..." (Metzger, 2013, p. 782)

It is clear from this recent work that researchers investigating collaborative practices taking place between planners and stakeholders need to be aware of the more problematic aspects of stakeholder involvement raised by Metzger (2013) when using the various categorisations outlined in the wider body of literature on this issue. Whoever decides upon the legitimacy of a particular grouping of stakeholders, and is responsible for initiating that involvement, clearly wields considerable power within the collaborative process.

A recent Australian study (Legacy, 2010) also offers useful insights into the ways in which planners and stakeholders interact within the plan making process. The study draws an important distinction between stakeholder engagement and stakeholder deliberation. Legacy argues that stakeholder engagement is "simply the inclusion of a range of stakeholder actors in the plan making process" (Legacy, 2010, p. 2706) whilst stakeholder deliberation involves " face to face dialogue between actors" (Legacy, 2010, p. 2706). The paper is primarily concerned to explore stakeholder involvement and the question of legitimacy of plan making and therefore concentrates on the challenges associated with face to face dialogue which it argues is fraught with complexity. It can be argued that stakeholder engagement is equally complex if the interpretations offered by Metzger 2013 are also taken into account. The literature concerned with stakeholders within the planning process is wide ranging and provides a rich source of experience to guide this study. This section has provided some initial insights into the ways in which stakeholders have been conceptualised in academic literature. As stakeholders feature significantly within the empirical component of this study, further analysis is conducted of other academic work on the role of the stakeholder and is incorporated into the development of the conceptual framework (see chapter 4).

Concluding Remarks

The academic literature reviewed for this study has been presented and discussed in three stages. Part 1 explored the academic debates surrounding the English planning system 1997-2013; Part 2 reviewed infrastructure planning research; and Part 3 explored how the actions of planning practitioners and infrastructure stakeholders have, so far, been investigated and understood. Taking such an approach ensures that all the main components embedded in the aim of this study have initially been fully considered as part of the literature review. The development of the English planning system; the debates surrounding the introduction of strategic spatial planning; and the questions which are now posed by the localist agenda form the turbulent context within which planning professionals face the challenges of daily practice. Part 2 of the chapter shows the heavy emphasis which has been placed on large scale and national infrastructure projects in both international and domestic infrastructure planning research. Researching infrastructure planning within the local planning system has largely been focussed on local funding issues and has revolved around the spatial planning narrative over the past decade. Part 3 of the review has shown that there has been limited consultation with local practitioners to understand current attitudes towards spatial planning and towards infrastructure practices. There are clearly uncertainties and gaps in understanding about infrastructure planning within the local planning system in England which remain to be fully addressed. It is the intention of this study to make a contribution to this task.

CHAPTER 3

PLANNING POLICY EXPERIMENTATION 1997-2013

Introduction

The preceding sections of the thesis have explored the geopolitical and economic importance of infrastructure planning through a review of the published academic research. This chapter focuses on the domestic legislative and policy context, summarising more than a decade of constant change and controversy for planning in Britain. New Labour and the Coalition governments have both been intently fixated on the need to stimulate economic growth, and have used the planning system as a key instrument in that process. This chapter exposes both the scale and the contrasting nature of the respective planning reform programmes and argues that the overall effect has been that practising planners have been left to deal with the confusion, contradictions and the criticism.

The general trends have already been identified in the more recently published academic literature. It has latterly been observed that,

> "Since the turn of the 21st century there has been no greater pace of reform to planning in Britain...New Labour {and the} Coalition governments....have embarked on a continuous cycle of planning reform, intended to make planning more relevant and responsive to the needs of a modern and constantly evolving nation" (Clifford & Tewdwr-Jones, 2012, p. xi).

It has also been argued that the planning system has been subjected to a fast paced and sustained process of policy experimentation.

> "One of the features of the British system of government that European planning academics tend to notice is the dramatic policy swings that can come about following national elections" (Waterhout et al, 2012, cited in Haughton, 2012, p. 98)

This chapter picks up these themes, charting the twists and turns in the policy and legislative framework affecting planning between 1997-2013 to set out the context within which the operational realities of local planning can be studied and analysed in the remainder of the thesis.

Before embarking on the analysis, it is important to explain the scope of this chapter. It is acknowledged that legislative and policy changes which have taken place over this period have had a fundamental impact across the whole of the UK and many academic studies have adopted a comparative approach to study the planning reforms and wider policy changes post devolution (Haughton et al, 2010; Clifford & Tewdwr-Jones, 2013). This chapter, however, concentrates on the turbulent, complex, contradictory and experimental nature of the policy environment within which English local planners have been striving to work on infrastructure planning. To illustrate the impact and contrasts which define this period of English planning, the content of the chapter is arranged chronologically, dealing firstly with the reform programme instigated by New Labour and then addressing the policy strategy of the incumbent Coalition government. The arguments are then considered and discussed in a concluding section.

New Labour 1997-2010

Although planning reform was not high on the list of priorities for the New Labour government when first elected in 1997, changes to the planning system soon began to rise up the agenda. The increased attention arose from the preoccupation with promoting economic growth and most of the problems and inhibitors were attributed to an inefficient planning service (Barker, 2004; Barker, 2006). New Labour heeded the growing concern about the inhibitory effect of the planning system on business decision making in a modern, growing economy. The CBI, TUC, HM Treasury, and the Barker Review 2004 (Barker, 2004) identified barriers to housing delivery and economic development which were being created through poor infrastructure delivery. The Barker Review of Land Use Planning (Barker, 2006) estimated that the planning system was responsible for delays which cost the economy an estimated £2.7 billion per year. Barker argued that the priority was to improve the overall efficiency of the planning system and one of the ways suggested to achieve this was to ensure that the plan led system provided for infrastructure to be planned in a way that facilitated development and for planned infrastructure to be used more effectively (Barker, 2006). There were also concerns about the capacity of the planning system to support other aspects of New Labour policy on sustainability, environmental protection and place making (Egan, 2004)

The critique of the planning system was vehement; New Labour aimed to make planning more responsive and less regulatory, more inclusive, more collaborative, more results driven, less bureaucratic and more evidence based (Shaw & Lord, 2009). In a speech in 2004, then Deputy Prime Minister, John Prescott, announced that the planning system Labour had inherited when

elected was 'creaking' and a major programme of reform was necessary to make planning 'more relevant, more interesting, more effective and more efficient' (Prescott, 2004).

The New Labour Reform Agenda

The centre piece of New Labour planning reform was the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (HM Govt, 2004). The Planning Green Paper: Delivering a Fundamental Change (DTLR, 2001a) marked the formal start of planning reform process. The Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 established a new, three tier hierarchy of statutory planning at national, regional, and local levels of planning. The key components of the 2004 Act are explained below.

At that time the national tier was the responsibility of Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, and its primary role was to introduce and administer the statutory framework for planning and prepare and publish government circulars on central government planning policy in Planning Policy Statements (PPSs). The approach to guidance in the form of PPSs was eventually to become one of the most heavily criticised aspect of the New Labour planning reforms due to its overly prescriptive nature.

Part 1 of the PCPA 2004 addressed the arrangements for regional spatial planning and heralded the beginning of a fully regional model. Regional planning bodies (RPBs) were responsible for the preparation, monitoring and updating of 'Regional Spatial Strategies' (RSSs). RSSs were eventually to be merged with the Regional Economic Strategies prepared by Regional

Development Agencies in 2009. These were profound changes to the way that strategic planning had been practiced previously; between 1974 - 2004 the strategic planning function was held by upper tier local authorities; county councils or unitary authorities. County councils had previously produced structure plans which provided the strategic context with which local plans were developed by District Councils.

Part 2 of the PCPA 2004 addressed local spatial planning. The 2004 Act charged Local Planning Authorities with the responsibility of preparing a new system of local plans in England, called the Local Development Framework (LDF). LDFs comprised a folder of documents, including development plan documents (DPDs), the most important of which was the strategic Core Strategy (CS) which set out the key spatial vision of the authority over the next 15-20 years; Supplementary Planning documents (SPDs); a statement of community involvement (SCI) and a project plan called the local development scheme (LDS). A sustainability appraisal (SA) was also to be undertaken to assess the economic, environmental and social impacts of plan policies. The PCPA 2004 was designed to place greater attention upon performance monitoring through Annual Monitoring Reports (AMRs).

The legislative basis for CIL was founded in the Planning Act 2008 (DCLG, 2008c). Under the legislation, local authorities were empowered to raise money from owners and developers of land to fund infrastructure to support development in the area. CIL was not considered obligatory for LPAs, but where it was used, the levy would be applied to most new buildings with charges based on the size and type of the new development. The introduction of CIL

facilitated the integration of the funding for development into mainstream local authority funding. Up to that point LPAs had focussed on generating ad hoc developer contributions through 106 agreements. Under the CIL legislation the aim was to build up better consistency in negotiating developer contributions based on the size and type of all development. In order to achieve this each local authority was empowered to set a CIL tariff using the infrastructure delivery schedule as the basis for the calculation. Thus, Morphet (2011, p.18) argues that, " In the new model, spatial planning is integrating the delivery of infrastructure on the ground as well as integrating financial investment in a new way".

The Implications for Local Planning

The PCPA 2004 (HM Govt, 2004) and the Planning Act 2008 (HM Govt, 2008) had profound implications, not just in resetting the strategic locus for planning within a new regional framework, but also for planning at the local level and the role of local authority planners. The policy framework introduced in the 2004 legislation introduced spatial planning into the planning system; a move which some argued transformed the role of local planners as part of a wider strategy intended to draw planners much more readily into the wider local governance architecture, and make their key task the coordination and provision of infrastructure (Morphet, 2009 a&b).

The changing role for planners, heralded through the introduction of the PCPA 2004, can only be fully understood when considered in the context of a wider programme of policy and legislative changes and the process of constitutional reform initiated by New Labour from 1997 which served to transform the public

sector bringing it together into " ....a more unified whole by converging budgets, a common and more unified set of targets, a common evidence base and a single approach to external performance inspection" (Morphet, 2009, p. 395).

Whilst the components of the LDF had been set out in the 2004 PCPA, the full implications for the integration of local planning within the wider local governance framework became much more apparent in the context of further legislation, as set out in other policy guidance and statements including Planning Policy Statement 12 (ODPM 2004a; CLG, 2008a). The fundamental changes defined in the legislation and the broader framework of New Labour policy making are encapsulated in the following diagram (Fig 4) of the local governance architecture and policy making structure under New Labour.

Fig 4. Local Governance and Delivery Architecture

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          ┌─────────────────────────────┐
          │ Local Strategic Partnership │
          └─────────────────────────────┘
                        │
          ┌─────────────────────────────┐
          │ Sustainable Community Strategy │
          └─────────────────────────────┘
                        │
        ┌───────────────┴───────────────┐
┌───────────────────────┐   ┌───────────────────────────┐
│ Local Area Agreement  │   │ Local Development Framework │
└───────────────────────┘   └───────────────────────────┘
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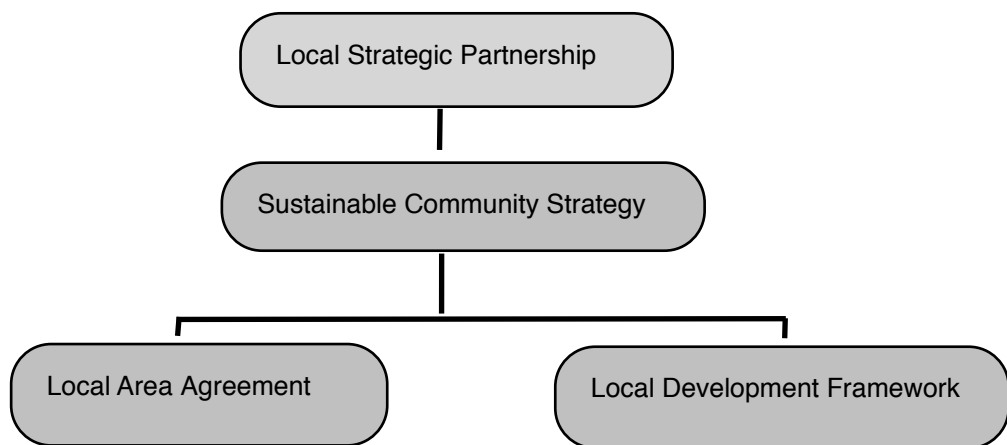
Source:

(Morphet, 2009, p. 397)

The PCPA 2004 was part of a progression, a further stage in a New Labour policy process which began with the Local Government Act 2000 when the duty to prepare a Community Strategy was placed on all Local Authorities. Changes to local government gave primacy to the role of Local Strategic Partnerships (LSPs), bringing together the evidence and coordinating what needed to be done, with the Sustainable Communities Strategy being the document which was the overarching framework defining the overall vision and strategy for the next 20 years.

The progression and direction of New Labour policy had been developed in the Planning Green Paper (DTLR, 2001a) with the statement that,

> " We need to ensure that local plans are better integrated ... enabling them to become the land use and development delivery mechanism for the objectives and policies set out in the Community Strategy" (DTLR, 2001a, para 4.7)

The 2004 Act, in combination with PPS 12 (CLG 2008a paras 4.8-12), required the LDF to become the mechanism for local infrastructure planning and delivery. The LDF was to include an infrastructure delivery strategy within the CS and an infrastructure delivery schedule of specific infrastructure projects as part of the evidence base. The key role of the Core Strategy was to identify what was required within the area to achieve the vision as set out in the SCS and the LAA. The Core Strategy was required to be in general conformity with the RSS which provided an overarching policy framework for the region and set out requirements for housing, transport, the environment and economy. Key to the formulation of the Core Strategy was the task of identifying the infrastructure

deficiencies and requirements of the area. Infrastructure was defined in its broadest sense and ranged across utilities, transport, community facilities, day nurseries and green spaces; the definition of infrastructure was expected to include all physical, social and green infrastructures (CLG, 2008a). The task was to identify existing needs and to anticipate future requirements for the area. The development of infrastructure planning involved local planners engaging with a vast range of partners; both within their own local authority; in neighbouring authorities and across a vast spectrum of other stakeholder groups and agencies from the public, voluntary and private sectors. Such wide ranging involvement by planners was necessary to firstly produce an infrastructure delivery schedule to accompany the CS, but secondly to play a more integral part in the process of infrastructure planning within the wider local authority framework. The policy framework initiated by New Labour required planners to become proactively involved in Infrastructure Delivery Groups within the local authority. It was anticipated that Infrastructure Delivery Groups (IDGs) would operate as a subgroup of the LSP and would be the forum through which the infrastructure planning strategy could be coordinated and advanced. The role of planners was therefore transformed from one which simply fed into the process of managing the resources within the local authority area through the local development plan, to one which involved them in a far more holistic approach through the Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) and the SCS. Fig 5 (see below) is an adapted version of Fig 4, showing in more detail how the role of the local planner was intended to fit into the local authority wide infrastructure planning strategy. The policy framework incorporated local planners into the working of Infrastructure Delivery Groups (IDGs) with other participants in the Local Strategic Partnership. The IDG was intended to act as a conduit through

which planners and the wider body of agencies involved in the infrastructure

planning process came together, facilitating the free flow of infrastructure

evidence and data to enable a more holistic process to develop.

Fig 5. Role of Local Planners in Local Authority Infrastructure Delivery Process

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              ┌─────────────────────────────┐
              │ Local Strategic Partnership  │
              └─────────────────────────────┘
                           │
              ┌─────────────────────────────┐
              │   Sustainable Community      │
              │         Strategy             │
              └─────────────────────────────┘
                           │
              ┌─────────────────────────────┐
              │ Infrastructure Delivery Group│
              └─────────────────────────────┘
                           │
          ┌────────────────┴─────────────────┐
   ┌─────────────┐              ┌──────────────────────┐
   │ Local Area  │              │  Local Development    │
   │ Agreement   │              │     Framework         │
   └─────────────┘              └──────────────────────┘
                                          │
                                 ┌────────┴─────────┐
                          ┌─────────────┐   ┌──────────────────┐
                          │   Core      │   │ Infrastructure   │
                          │  Strategy   │   │ Delivery Schedule│
                          └─────────────┘   └──────────────────┘
```
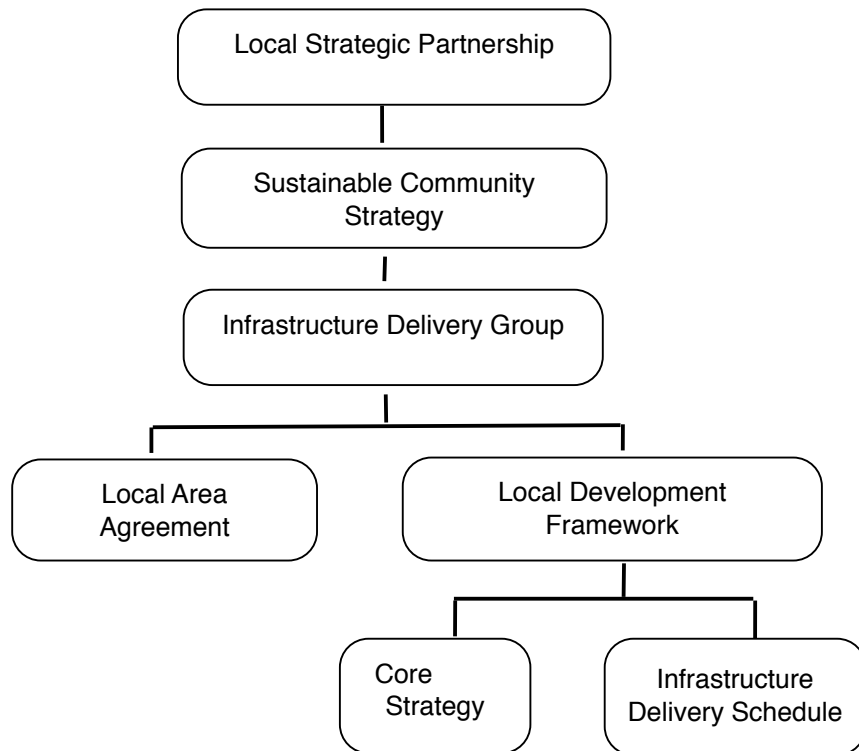
(Source: Author)

All these policy issues were brought together to form the basis of a single

narrative within the 'Steps Approach to Infrastructure Planning and

Delivery' (Morphet, 2009a). Fig 6. summarises the Steps Approach,

Fig 6. Summary of The Steps Approach		
Stage	**Title**	**Task**
Step 1	Vision/ Policy Context	Formulate long term vision for the area, Establish a Sustainable Community Strategy
Step 2	Governance	Establish Infrastructure Group for infrastructure and asset management. Establish engagement between stakeholders
Step 3	Evidence Gathering	Resource overview, identify existing public sector capital programme commitments and private assets from all sectors, and consider effective joint use of public sector assets
Step 4	Standards & Deficits	Assess what infrastructure is provided and whether it meets current needs, identify future local deficits likely to result from local plan process, identify needs for strategic sites
Step 5	IDP - Infrastructure Delivery Plan	Identify infrastructure requirements and resources (5 year periods), viability testing and sustainability appraisal
Step 6	Validation	Consult on infrastructure delivery plan schedule, prepare an infrastructure delivery strategy, undertake risk assessment
Step 7	Delivery	Implement infrastructure delivery programme, undertake annual monitoring and review of delivery

(Source material: PAS, 2008; PAS, 2009b, p.10; Morphet, 2011a)

The Steps Approach was a highly structured form of guidance developed by the Planning Advisory Service (PAS) and offered mainly to planning practitioners across the country through training programmes in the mid 2000s. 13 pilot areas were set up to follow the Steps Approach. Each pilot area was selected to cover a range of administrative areas. Fig 7. is a list of the pilot areas involved:-

Fig 7. Steps Approach Pilot Areas
Adur / Worthing
Bath and North East Somerset Council
Bolton County Council
Durham County Council
London Borough of Ealing
Central Lincolnshire
Leeds City Council
Portsmouth City Council
Sheffield City Council
South Somerset District Council
South Worcestershire
Tunbridge Wells BC and Kent County Council
Wealden DC

(Source, PAS 2010a)

PAS produced a quarterly progress report (only 2 of which were ever published however). (PAS, 2010a; PAS, 2010b) and further very detailed guidance which was accessible to local planners on the Communities of Practice website. The two progress reports documented the implementation challenges experienced in the pilot areas, including difficulties related to evidence gathering, funding, engaging corporate and external partners, achieving corporate support, and aligning the IDP and LDF process (PAS, 2010a; PAS, 2010b).

The Planning Inspectorate, in a review of the Local Development Framework documents which had been submitted for examination, also concluded that,

> "Many local authorities are finding the infrastructure element of delivery very challenging" (Planning Inspectorate, 2009, p. 8)

Planning Inspectorate concerns revolved around the fact that submitted plans, "did not make clear whether key partners were signed up for such infrastructure provision... " [the report continued].. "before the plan can be found sound such a deficiency would need to be adequately addressed" (Planning Inspectorate, 2009, p.8). The report claimed that some plans contained proposals that depended on major infrastructure projects without any support from the infrastructure provider.

In the PINs report, aptly titled, 'Learning from Experience' planners were urged to have greater confidence, be more pragmatic, and encouraged to work more proactively on infrastructure planning,

> "In a number of instances the infrastructure content of plans amounts to little more than a generalised and highly ambitious 'wish list' with no indication of how viable the schemes are, how critical they are to the delivery of the plan or whether there is a reasonable prospect of implementation within any required timetable… Clearly many planning authorities are finding it difficult to effectively engage with some of the infrastructure providers " (Planning Inspectorate, 2009. p. 8)

The Response of Local Planners

It has been pointed out that the implications inherent in New Labour policy making, particularly the fundamental transformations to the role of local planners through the introduction of the PCPA 2004 (HM Govt, 2004) and PPS12 (CLG, 2008a), have never been fully appreciated or grasped by local planners. It is certainly the case that planners struggled with the top down, overly prescriptive implementation style imposed by New Labour and the complexities involved in the new legislation: Recent research has provided a comprehensive analysis using first hand accounts from local planners about their experiences of spatial planning and the work documents the challenges local authority planners said they had experienced (Clifford, 2008;2012; Clifford & Tewdwr-Jones, 2013). The whole policy framework proposed by New Labour has been described by planning practitioners as having to deal with a chaotic conveyor belt of initiatives (Clifford, 2012). It is also the case that a considerable shock wave passed through the planning profession when the first two Core

Strategies to be examined against the test of soundness, for Lichfield and Stafford, were found to be unsound in 2006 (Acres, 2006) The uncertainty and embarrassment caused a dip in the numbers of CSs submitted for examination over the following couple of years. These events dashed initial optimism that all LDFs would be in place within three years. In March 2008 only 22 out of the 396 LPAs in England had a CS in place (Killian & Pretty, 2008)

The fact that there was such a lack lustre response to the LDF process has however a much deeper cause than the implementation style or the confusion created by the Planning Inspectorate decisions over the early CS documents. It has been argued that local planners were struck with 'incredulity and disbelief' when the full implications associated with the legislative framework had been explained (Morphet, 2009b). It has been suggested (Morphet, 2009b) that the difficulties associated with the implementation of spatial planning relate to the potential challenges local planners felt to their traditional status when it was realised that the direction of New Labour policy making for the public sector challenged the primacy of local development plans. It has been observed (Morphet, 2009b) that local planners attempted to work with the spatial planning framework by trying to make the new legislation work from within a traditional land use planning mindset. New Labour planning policy, and the wider modernisation of local government, turned the role of planners in relation to infrastructure planning on its head; the changes meant that local planners were no longer to be simply engaged primarily in negotiating one off infrastructure contributions with the purpose of supplementing mainstream budgets. In response to the 2004 Act and planning guidance, planners were to be involved in integrating the development plan to the provision of infrastructure through a

more holistic approach to all public and private sector investment and working within the overarching framework of the Sustainable Community Strategy. The changes to the role of local planners gave the planning profession a key role within the wider local governance framework. The effect which was intended through the introduction of spatial planning is captured in the following statement,

> "... the result has been an approach to spatial planning which is integrated with other public services and has as its main focus the delivery of infrastructure... the success of spatial planning will be judged on the extent to which it can deliver more effective public service investment at the local level to support the attainment of objectives for the area" (Morphet, 2009, p. 406)

The manner in which this new role for local planners in town halls has subsequently been absorbed into practice forms a key focus for this study and is discussed further in the conclusions for this chapter.

Major Infrastructure Planning Reform

Although this study is primarily concerned with infrastructure planning within the local planning framework brought about by New Labour, it is also important to give a brief outline of the changes instigated to the planning of major infrastructure in England between 1997-2010. The inquiries led by Kate Barker and Rod Eddington into planning and transport respectively (Barker, 2006; Eddington, 2006) were largely responsible for kick starting the process to establish a independent planning body to make decisions on major infrastructure. Key departments of government, the Treasury, Department of

Trade and Industry and the Cabinet Office were all supportive of such planning changes and the reforms were realised in the Planning Act 2008 (HM Govt, 2008). There were two main elements to the legislation the introduction of National Policy Statements (NPSs) and the creation of the Infrastructure Planning Commission (IPC).

All 12 key infrastructure sectors were covered by national policy statements (NPSs) to be developed by the sectoral Ministries for energy, transport and environment. NPS's have limited input from the Department for Communities and Local Government which had primary responsibility for planning. NPS's have been criticised for being statements of principle and for being aspatial and there have also been concerns that NPS's have the capacity to be potentially contradictory.

The Infrastructure Planning Commission was created by New Labour and intended to be a body of impartial experts, operating independently of politicians, who could speed up the decision making process on major projects. The IPC was always unpopular with the Liberal Democrat and Conservative opposition and was therefore ripe for further reform with the change of government in May 2010. (Major infrastructure planning and the role of the IPC are issues which are examined further, in the later sections of this chapter, as part of the analysis of planning reforms under the Coalition government)

The Coalition Government 2010-2013

The outcome of the 6th May 2010 was a hung parliament; only the second UK general election to deliver such a result since the second world war. It was not until the 12th May 2010 that the Conservatives and the Liberal Democrats announced that the two parties had reached a 'coalition deal'. The Coalition immediately embarked on a programme of radical policy transformation. The foreword to the Coalition Agreement (jointly written by Conservatives' leader, and now prime minister, David Cameron and the Liberal Democrat leader, and deputy prime minister, Nick Clegg) published 20th May 2010, set the tone of the policy proposals which were to come. It was declared that the two parties shared,

> " Conviction that the days of big government are over; that the centralisation and top down control have proved a failure. We believe that the time has come to dispose of power more widely in Britain today; to recognise that we will only make progress if we help people to come together to make life better. In short it is our ambition to distribute power and opportunity to people rather than hoarding authority within government. That way we can build the free, fair and responsible society we want to see" (Liberal Democrats, 2010)

Like the New Labour government which preceded them, the Coalition government declared that they were striving to achieve a speedy and efficient planning system as part of their own policy strategy for the modernisation of governance. The speed and scale of the intended change has been described as a 'shock and awe tactic' (Haughton, 2012) rather than a gradual process of evolutionary change. In February 2010, the Conservative Party had published

Open Source Planning, a Green Paper, as advance warning in preparation for

the forthcoming General Election. The Conservatives argued that only a radical

reboot of the planning system would have the necessary effect (Conservatives,

2010, p.1) if they were to achieve their declared aims, namely, to kick start the

economy in the wake of the global financial crisis of 2008; reduce state

regulation and promote civic engagement and collaboration (Conservatives,

2010). In a manner reminiscent of New Labour, it was claimed that,

> " Planning is acting as a serious brake on growth,
> slowing the delivery of much needed new jobs and
> new business" (DCLG, 2011a)

The Coalition claimed that it was time to repair planning, which was described

as a "broken system". The incoming government considered New Labour

planning reform to have been wholly unsuccessful, pointing to the fact that

centralised targets and a top down approach had failed in every respect, but in

particular it had failed to improve house building. Data produced by the

Planning Inspectorate which highlighted the poor performance of local

authorities regarding the implementation New Labour planning reforms provided

the Coalition with the necessary evidence to support their argument that change

was badly needed. The failure of almost half the local authorities across the

country to secure an adopted core strategy was an important and embarrassing

conclusion which the Coalition highlighted in the PINs report (CLG, 2011b).

Open Source planning was intended to "radically reboot" the planning system in

a number of ways. The following summarises the intended changes and is

drawn from key policy documents:-

• Streamline the planning system, and reduce red tape

• Revocation of Regional Strategic Planning, and national and regional housing targets

• Introduce the duty to co operate to encourage and enable strategic planning in the absence of a statutory regional tier

• Introduce a system of collaborative neighbourhood planning

• Restate the primacy of adopted local plans

• Introduce the presumption in favour of sustainable development

• Promote the role of Local Enterprise Partnerships for strategic planning and housing delivery

• Promote a major upswing in development and construction, and modernise infrastructure

• Provide certainty to investors

• Restore local democratic accountability, collaborative democracy and, community engagement

• Introduce a simple and consolidated national planning framework to set out national and economic priorities

• Reframe the Infrastructure Planning Commission to ensure democratic accountability

(Conservatives, 2010; CLG, 2010b)

National Infrastructure Planning

The Coalition moved quickly on the issue of planning for nationally significant infrastructure projects in making significant changes to the national governance of such projects. The Infrastructure Planning Commission (IPC), which had been introduced by New Labour in 2008 and which operated under New Labour as a quango, was quickly brought back into the restructured Planning Inspectorate as the Major Infrastructure Planning Unit. Sir Michael Pitt, Chair and Commissioner of the IPC, and a Chief Executive of the Planning Inspectorate set out the changes and improvements which he envisaged for the strategy to improve the delivery of national infrastructure and the need to speed up the delivery of the 69 projects now underway. In a recent speech, Sir Michael Pitt argued that the Planning Act, 2008 and the Localism Act, 2011 were in fact compatible (Westminster, Energy, Environment and Transport Forum, 2011)

The National Infrastructure Plan (NIP) (HM Treasury and UK Infrastructure, 2010; 2011; 2012) is intended to set out a new strategy for meeting the infrastructure needs of the UK economy. The document is based upon a cross sector analysis and brings together information about energy, transport, digital and environmental infrastructure requirements. Previously infrastructure programmes were published by individual government departments as separate, uncoordinated project lists. NIP identifies over 500 specific projects, and sets out a new approach to co ordinating funding involving both the public and private sector. The Coalition claims that NIP ensures the efficient and timely delivery of infrastructure necessary to stimulate economic growth. NIP stresses the need for an integrated and inter sectoral approach to ensure delivery (HM Treasury, 2011, para, 4.3). NIP also argues that local authorities must work

together across boundaries to properly plan for infrastructure provision (HM Treasury, 2011, para 4.24).

The document is however problematic in two important ways. Firstly there is a lack of any overarching analysis of the key investments relating to the infrastructure projects (Wong et al, 2012; RTPI, 2012). Secondly, the document is entirely focussed upon the co ordination and delivery of infrastructure projects of national importance, and fails to address the delivery of infrastructure at local authority level when there is a clear interdependency between major and smaller scale projects if sustainable development is to be achieved. Finally, the factor which has caused considerable concern is the lack of spatial dimension. (Westminster Energy, Environment and Transport Forum, 2011)

At around the same time, the decentralisation of powers from central government to eight designated core cities in England and their surrounding functional areas formed the basis of the Unlocking Growth in Cities Report (HM Government, 2011b). The initiative and devolved powers are built upon various initiatives such as Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) (discussed in more detail later in this chapter and in chapter 8), the regional growth fund, growing places fund and urban broadband fund, also more flexible financial powers through business rate retention and new borrowing powers. There is however no co ordination between the National Infrastructure Plan and the strategy for Core Cities (Wong et al, 2012; RTPI, 2012).

Localism

Eric Pickles as the new Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government had this to say in a speech he gave on 11 June 2010,

> "... so when people ask me about my priorities in Government, I have 3 very clear priorities: Localism, and we'll weave that into everything we do from parks to finance to policy. My second priority is localism, and my third is ... localism"
> (Pickles, 2010a)

The fundamental basis of Coalition reform of the planning system at the local level revolved around de-centralising planning to the level of local communities as part of a wider strategy to reduce, replace and outsource government tasks, as outlined in the 2010 White Paper 'Local Growth: Realising Every Place's Potential' (HM Government; 2010b). The Secretary of State commented that,

> " Localism isn't just about giving power back to local government. We are not talking about a war between you and me. Its even more important that we push power downwards and outwards to the lowest possible level. Out to the folks themselves" (Pickles, 2010a)

The Localism Bill (HM Govt, 2010) was introduced to parliament in December 2010 and contained both the government's formal proposals to abolish regional planning and to encourage the creation of more neighbourhood plans. The Bill did not, however, make any substantive changes to the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL). As explained earlier in this chapter, CIL was introduced by New Labour as part of the Planning Act 2008 (HM Govt, 2008). The Coalition maintained the view that a tariff-based approach provided speed,

certainty and transparency in the securing of development funds for supporting

infrastructure provision. CIL is not subject to negotiation like the system of

securing developer contributions under 106 agreements. The Coalition

therefore made some amendments to the original legislative framework for CIL

but proposed its continuance. According to Coalition figures, only 6% of all

planning permissions brought any contributions to infrastructure costs required

as a result of development, but it was anticipated that continuing with CIL had

the potential to raise an estimated £1 billion a year in funding by 2016 (DCLG,

2011d). The CIL regulations came into force in April 2010 and the amendments

on 6th April 2011.

The localism bill itself attracted considerable technical debate, but only caught

limited interest from the media and the public (Haughton, 2012). Despite the

absence of any particular public interest, the Coalition argued that local

communities know their areas better than anyone else; inviting communities

and people to take ownership of their neighbourhoods and stimulate economic

development and growth from the bottom up through 'open source planning'.

Neighbourhood Planning

The Localism Act (HM Govt, 2011a) introduced a neighbourhood tier of planning in England which sits below that of districts or boroughs and, if the Government's aspirations are realised, will see neighbourhood plans becoming, "The new building blocks of the planning system with communities having the power to grant planning permission if a majority of electors are in favour" (Pickles, 2010b). The basic principles of neighbourhood planning related to: Giving local communities genuine opportunities to influence the future of the places in which they live; facilitating both residents, employees and businesses to come together through a local parish council or neighbourhood forum to make decisions about the shaping of their own environment; and, through a simple and concise plan, to have the ability to use neighbourhood planning to grant full or outline planning permission in areas where they determined that development should go ahead. The neighbourhood plan would need to be consistent with the strategic vision for the wider area as contained in the local plan and with national planning policy (DCLG, 2011a, p15)

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) is at the heart of the government's planning reforms for creating 'the big society'. Greg Clark MP, Minister for Decentralisation and Cities, announced a review of national planning policy in December 2010 (Clark, 2010). To help with that review, the government established a Practitioners Advisory Group (PAG, 2010). The PAG involved four experts chosen by the government to give a practitioners perspective on what the NPPF should contain. The draft National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) was circulated for consultation in July 2011 and was subsequently published on 27th March 2012. The tone of government intentions, and the rationale which underpinned the NPPF, was summarised in the foreword,

> ".. in recent years, planning has tended to exclude, rather than to include, people and communities. In part, this has been a result of targets being imposed, and decisions taken, by bodies remote from them. Dismantling the unaccountable regional apparatus and introducing neighbourhood planning addresses this. In part, people have been put off from getting involved because planning policy itself has become so elaborate and forbidding - the preserve of specialists, rather than people in communities" (CLG, 2011a, p.v)

The published document attempted to encapsulate national policy under the themes of 'planning for prosperity', 'planning for people' and 'planning for places'. It also provided guidance on plan making and development management and introduced the concept of the presumption in favour of

sustainable development which was the singularly most controversial aspect of the NPPF and which is discussed in detail later in this section.

The NPPF is intentionally aspatial, setting out a set of national general principles in a one size fits all approach (Wong et al, 2012a&b). The Coalition regarded planning policy under New Labour to have been inordinately complex and, in order to 'simplify' planning, the NPPF condenses planning guidance into under 50 pages, from the previous 1000 pages. The NPPF is intended to be one single, concise document to replace the raft of planning policy statements produced by New Labour. In both substance and symbolically, therefore, the document represents the Coalition efforts to simplify, streamline and speed up the planning process.

A key aspect of the NPPF is the introduction of the 'presumption in favour of sustainable development' (DCLG, 2011c). In introducing this principle into the NPPF the government declared that it expected the default answer to development to be 'yes', unless this would compromise key sustainable development principles set out in the remainder of the document. The intentions behind this move attracted considerable attention from the planning profession, the media and the general public. The NPPF consultation period in 2011 generated considerable controversy. It was argued that the document tipped the balance strongly in favour of business and the economy to the detriment of other social and environmental considerations. Powerful interest groups including the National Trust, Campaign to Protect Rural England and Friends of the Earth all lobbied strongly against the dangers of the 'presumption in favour' being interpreted as a developers charter. The National Trust asserted that,

" The government's planning reforms could lead to
unchecked and damaging development in the
undesignated countryside on a scale not seen since
the 1930s" (National Trust, 2011)

In response to the consultation process, the government modified the tone of

the document in order to dissipate concerns. In the spotlight of intense media

interest, references to 'significant weight' on economic growth were, for

example, deleted from the final draft document (DCLG, 2011c) and in the

published document (DCLG, 2012). The NPPF advises that development

interests should be steered towards the prioritisation of brownfield sites in the

first instance (DCLG, 2012).

In the context of these policy developments, the role of the local plan therefore

became even more important. The NPPF refers to the presumption in favour of

sustainable development as the "Golden thread" running through planning at

the local level with the local plan remaining the fundamental component of local

planning policy (DCLG, 2012). "The NPPF makes it clear that the local plan is,

as the communities and local government select committee put it, the keystone

of the planning edifice" as publicised in Planning Magazine (Geoghegan, 2012).

The Coalition made reassuring noises to suggest that the presumption in favour

of sustainable development would work, through (and not against local plans).

(ibid, 2012) A similar tone was adopted in the wider media and press releases at

the time of the publication of the NPPF on the 27th March 2012.

The NPPF states that the presumption in favour of sustainable development applies in areas where, "The development plan is absent, silent or relevant policies are out of date granting permission" (CLG 2011a, para 14). The presumption in favour is clearly intended to place "under achieving" local authorities under pressure, not only to pick up the pace with adoption of the local plan, but also to make many more decisions in favour of development. Local authority areas which do not have a clear and adopted local plan are under the greatest risk of unsolicited, poorly uncoordinated, speculative development. Fig 8 (below) provides an up to date summary of progress with local plan making in England.

English Councils'
Local Plan coverage

key
☐ Adopted plan in place
■ No adopted plan
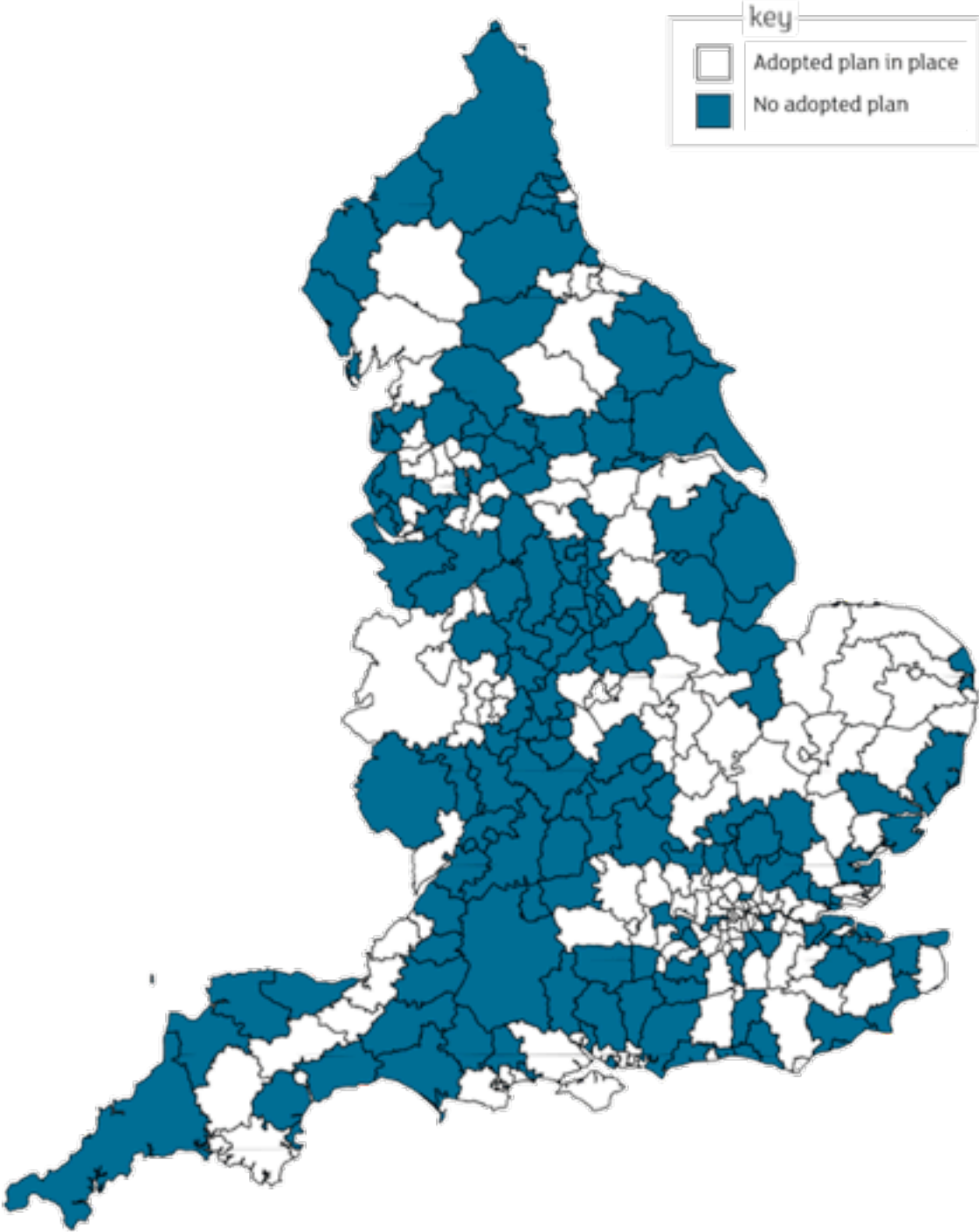
Fig 8. (Source: CPRE, 2012)

Plan status	Number	Percentage
Adopted plan	161	47.9
Published, submitted or found sound plan	77	22.9
No plan published	98	29.2
Total	**336**	**100**

Fig 9. Planning Inspectorate Local Plan Data (Source: Planning Inspectorate, 2012)

As the latest Planning Inspectorate monitoring data, currently available online, shows, (Fig 9), 52% of councils do not yet have a local plan in place. The Coalition initially gave local planning authorities (LPAs) a year to bring their local development plans into alignment with the new NPPF, with a deadline of 27th March 2012. As 23% of English councils have a local plan at quite an advanced stage of preparation (published, submitted or even found sound, but not yet adopted), there were calls from lobby groups such as the CPRE for the Planning Minister Nick Boles to extend the transitional period by a further 12 - 18 months in order to permit these councils to put an adopted plan in place for their area (CPRE, 2012)

The Labour Opposition have argued that the NPPF has the potential to create delay rather than speeding up development. They argue that open ended legislation will inevitably result in more planning appeals as the vague terms of the legislation are tested in the courts. Quoted in the planning press, the Opposition have argued that,

> " Far from giving us certainty there is likely to be delay as developments are held up by appeals and by the courts having to rule on a new and untested approach" (Planning Magazine, 2012)

In any event, even in circumstances where planning approvals are granted quickly and efficiently, there will continue to be serious difficulties in translating planning approvals into action if the associated infrastructure has not been properly anticipated, planned and put in place in a timely manner.

The 'duty to co operate' originally introduced in the Localism Act, has been further reinforced in the NPPF. Under the new legislation, all local authorities and public bodies have a duty to co operate on planning issues that cross administrative boundaries, particularly those which related to strategic priorities,

> "Local planning authorities should work collaboratively with
> other bodies to ensure that strategic priorities across local
> boundaries are properly co-ordinated and clearly reflected
> in individual Local Plans" (CLG, 2011a, para, 179)

The duty to cooperate has been introduced into the Coalition planning policy framework to address the strategic vacuum left by the revocation of the regional strategic framework. Revocation of regional strategic planning was expedited under section 109 of the Localism Act. However many social, environmental and economic issues can only be effectively addressed at a larger than local scale. Examples include strategic housing market areas; travel to work areas; the provision of infrastructure for transport, waste treatment; energy generation; telecommunications; water supply and water quality; the provision of health, security, and major community infrastructure facilities or to address climate change and environmental issues including flood risk.

Paragraphs 178-181 of the NPPF give further guidance on planning

strategically across local boundaries and highlight the importance of joint

working to meet development requirements that cannot be wholly met within a

single local planning area (LPA). Of particular relevance in this study is the

NPPF coverage of other public bodies, in addition to local councils, who are

also bound in some way by the 'duty to cooperate'. The following bodies are

required to cooperate with councils on issues of common concern to develop

sound local plans,

- Environment Agency
- English Heritage
- Natural England
- Mayor of London
- Civil Aviation Authority
- Homes and Communities Agency
- Primary Care Trusts
- Office of the Rail Regulator
- Highways Agency
- Transport for London
- Integrated Transport Authorities
- Highway Authorities
- Marine Management Organisation

Other bodies as Local Enterprise Partnerships; Local Nature Partnerships and

Private Sector utility providers do not have a statutory obligation to comply with

the Duty to Cooperate. It is however considered to be in their interests and

those of the councils involved to comply with the duty (DCLG, 2012).

Local Enterprise Partnerships

In the wake of the abolition of Regional Development Agencies (RDAs), the Coalition have put in place a new geography of voluntary partnerships aimed at stimulating enterprise and encouraging growth. These Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) have been established to reflect the new localist agenda through 'bottom up' bids and voluntary cross authority collaborative groupings. They are non statutory and non elected and involve multi agency permutations of local government officers, businesses and the private sector. The localist emphasis has led to the formation of LEPs of varying geographical size and scale, and variations in the numbers of local authority members and levels of experience and expertise. 24 LEPs were initially approved by the government in 2010. However, unlike the former regional arrangements, LEPs will not have planning powers, simply a broad remit which involves working ".....with partner planning authorities to develop strategic planning frameworks to address economic development and infrastructure issues" (HM Government, 2010, para, 3.21). Ministers have indicated that LEPs will need to rely on planning policies at national and local level (Morphet, 2011). The problematic manner in which LEPs have been introduced into the governance architecture is perhaps succinctly put in the following comment,

> "...LEPs appear to be considerably lacking in both resources and momentum, and are insufficiently embedded with government" (Shutt et al, 2012, p.13)

Uncertainty surrounds the future operation of LEPs and the ways in which the duty to cooperate which has been placed on local authorities under the Localism Act might work to achieve new, LEP driven, strategic frameworks. It has been suggested that LEPs could initially draw upon local development

plans and the associated infrastructure delivery plans produced by local

authorities. However, as the latest analysis of plan preparation performance

shows (see above). The problems were exacerbated by the uncertainties

surrounding Coalition reform proposals in the lead up to the election in 2010.

LPAs achieving an adopted local plan continues to be a slow process.

The Growth and Infrastructure Bill 2012

The Coalition government continues to produce a relentless stream of new

initiatives and planning reforms which they argue are necessary to kick start the

economy. In September 2012 came a series of housing and growth

announcements, including the Growth and Infrastructure Bill (HM Government,

2012). Through these proposals, the government claimed to be giving support

to businesses, developers and first time buyers, largely by 'slashing' what the

Coalition claims the 'unnecessary red tape' across the planning system.

Supported by the Deputy Prime Minister, David Cameron announced the

initiatives by stating,

> " The measures announced today show this
> Government is serious about rolling its sleeves up
> and doing all it can to kick-start the economy. Some
> of the proposals are controversial; others have been
> a long time in coming. But along with our Housing
> Strategy, they provide a comprehensive plan to
> unleash one of the biggest homebuilding
> programmes this country has seen in a generation.
> That means more investment around the country;
> more jobs for our people; and more young families
> able to realise their dreams and get on the housing
> ladder" (Cameron, 2012)

The proposals covered a number of issues and ambitious claims around plans

for multi million pounds worth of investment, but above all the plans involved

systematically denuding local government planning departments of their role in

local development. The key measures cover:-

• Creating the commercial environment to develop 70,000 new homes,
  including affordable housing and opportunities for first time buyers to get on
  the housing ladder by allowing developers to challenge affordable housing
  requirements imposed by local councils

• Boosting the construction sector by 140,000 jobs

• Giving a £40 billion for major infrastructure projects and £10 billion for new
  homes by guaranteeing debts of Housing Associations and private sector
  developers

• Bringing 5,000 empty homes back into use and create 15,000 affordable
  homes using new capital funding of £300m and the infrastructure guarantee.
  And boost the private rented sector in the light of the Montague report
  (Montague, 2012).

• Set up a system where developers planning large scale commercial and
  residential applications for major infrastructure could by pass local councils
  taking their proposals directly to the Planning Inspectorate

• Put 'poorly performing', (which the government equates to slow and adverse
  decision making) local planning departments into 'special measures' and allow
  developers to by pass the local planning system and improve access to fast
  track appeals

• Give 16,500 first time buyers a further £280m to assist with deposits on
  homes

• Remove some home and business property improvements from the planning
  applications process.

(Source: HM Govt, 2012)

Spatial Rebalancing and Public Sector Spending Cuts

The host of policy initiatives and planning reforms outlined in the second part of this chapter also need to be considered within the wider economic strategy of the Coalition government if this chapter is to provide a fully informed context for the remainder of the study. Coalition economic policy is predicated upon the imposition of radical public sector spending cuts which, the government argues, are a necessary component in rebalancing the domestic economy. The most recent academic research provides a detailed insight into this strategy (Tyler, 2013). It is suggested in the cited research that public sector spending cuts will reach £155 billion by 2015/6; and estimates indicate that there have already been 372,000 job losses in the public sector. Clearly the trajectory of government economic policy has a profound impact on public sector capability nationally. However, this new research signposts the particularly acute and divergent effects of public sector cuts between regions. Tyler (2013) argues that the current economic strategy has a far greater detrimental effect upon the regions traditionally associated with slower economic growth. Northern regions have become far more dependent upon the public sector for growth and jobs and therefore the current economic policies in the era of austerity are in fact exacerbating spatial imbalances across the country.

Tyler (2013) goes on to consider how these regional imbalances could be addressed by putting forward a number of strategic objectives which would promote the economic renaissance of northern regions and which include:-

• New investment in land reclamation, transformational infrastructure and skills

• Recognise the fundamental importance of knowledge transfers between people, people and business, and business to business to improve the competitiveness of places

• Speed up the pace of infrastructure delivery in low growth areas

• Give more attention to delivery vehicles - promote partnership working between private and public sector

(Source: Tyler, 2013)

The findings from the latest research provides an important basis from which to consider both the importance of infrastructure planning across England as a whole, and for specific regions which are most acutely affected by low growth, and economic and industrial malaise. New policy developments are a constant feature of the government drive for long term economic growth; the Heseltine Review being the most recent example (Heseltine 2013). Although the implications of the Review are only in the process of being considered by ministers in the Treasury and the Department for Business Innovation and Skills (BIS), the recommendations of the report need to be understood as part of the policy context of this study. The Heseltine Review sets out a comprehensive economic plan to improve growth. The published report, 'No Stone Unturned' makes the case for a major rebalancing of responsibilities for economic development between central and local government and between the government and the private sector.

The Heseltine Review seeks to realise the potential of local economies through local partnerships in a number of ways including empowering LEPs; devolution of some central funding streams from 2015; further investment through the Regional Growth Fund; promoting combined local authorities and reform of business regulation (Heseltine, 2013). These issues are revisited and their implications considered in the context of the key findings from this research in the concluding chapter (chapter 8).

Conclusions & Discussion

The net effect of the past 16 years of reform and experimentation has been to produce a confused and conflicted planning environment. Both New Labour and the Coalition governments have been dedicated to infrastructure development as a means to stimulate national growth, economic wellbeing and international competitiveness; albeit in very differing global and domestic financial climates. Both have also sought to use, and manipulate, the planning system in order to achieve their wider political ambitions. Both have claimed they inherited a broken planning system in order to justify their own respective strategies. Both have been unrelenting in their determination to produce wave after wave of policy announcements and initiatives. However, as this chapter has also shown, New Labour and the Coalition have set about the process of planning reform with very different views about the role for planning. Although there has been a clear neoliberal trajectory guiding the direction of policy over the past 16 years under both New Labour and the Coalition administrations, this chapter exposes some of the divergences in ideological perspective between the political parties. The first part of this chapter shows that New Labour saw the local planning system, firmly locked into a strong integrated public sector, as pivotal in

promoting and delivering infrastructure in association with the private and voluntary sectors; accompanied by a strategic regional framework; and a responsive decision making process for major infrastructure projects which operated independently from political interference by central government. It has been pointed out that,

> "In his foreword to the 2008 white paper Communities in Control: Real People, Real Power, for instance, the then prime minister Gordon Brown wrote about New Labour's desire from the outset to bolster local government " (Smith Institute, 2012, p.98).

However, in the determination to achieve their desired changes to the planning framework, New Labour adopted a prescriptive, heavily directed, target driven, centrally orchestrated implementation style. The Planning Advisory Service, 'Steps Approach to Infrastructure Planning' (described in this chapter) is a prime example of the way New Labour managed policy change generally between 1997-2010. In sharp contrast, and on the pretext of simplifying an overly bureaucratic and complex planning system, the Coalition have embarked on a sustained campaign to strip back planning powers, particularly at the local and regional level, as part of a wider strategy to dismantle the public sector and free business, the market and local people from what the Coalition argues are the inhibitive effects of the English planning system. Putting power into the hands of the unsuspecting general public through neighbourhood planning, bypassing town hall planning departments, striking out the regional strategic tier of the organisational structure, and reclaiming control for Whitehall over major infrastructure decision making are the central planks of Coalition planning policy.

The overall effect has been succinctly described as follows,

> " In Britain, planning is almost a paradigmatic example of a sector used as a "political football", one that every incoming administration attempts to use to explain the failings of the previous administration and demonstrate its own radical credentials. This makes for a bruised sector, accustomed to multiple reforms intended to 'cure' a problem that has been misdiagnosed" (Haughton, 2012, p. 98)

The preceding chapter of this study has already shown that the professional bodies which represent English planning have consistently supported the idea that planning should play a part in promoting economic recovery since the reform programme of New Labour was first mooted in the early 2000s (see Chapter 2). Such sentiments still underpin the latest responses to Coalition policy proposals. In the light of the Growth and Infrastructure Bill, the President of the RTPI commented,

> " We welcome proposals in the bill to make it easier and quicker to deliver important national infrastructure which is crucial to sustainable development and economic growth" (Haylock, 2012)

Colin Haylock also defended LPA performance, arguing that local planning needs to be well resourced and supported by both local and general government to be efficient and effective (Haylock, 2012). As the earlier part of this chapter shows, the overall performance of LPAs in England in terms of delivering adopted local plans has continued to remain lamentably slow and this has provided ample ammunition to feed Coalition media soundbites about the failures of English planning.

The twists and turns of government policy are relatively easy to chart; the responses of the professional bodies and lobbyists are also largely straightforward to follow. What remains unclear, however, is the way that the changes in emphasis and direction, the speed of travel, and the vitriol have been absorbed by practicing planners in their everyday operations. New Labour reforms were powerfully communicated, and adaptation to reform takes considerable time before it is established in practice. It is therefore possible that local planners have only recently begun to catch up with earlier phases of planning reform. The Coalition 'counter strategy' has been equally forcefully layered on top of the New Labour programme. Indeed the recent style of policy making by the Coalition has generally relied on ruthless extraction rather than policy replacement. There is, at present, a lack of clarity about the role of local planners in the context of Coalition planning reform and the Heseltine Review which recommends greater local fiscal empowerment and new collaborative architectures. There has been no recent study of local infrastructure planning practice to make any empirically based assessment of the impact of reforms upon local practitioners. Only a limited amount of research has been conducted which consults directly with planners 'at the coal face'. Clifford & Tewdwr-Jones (2013) have conducted such an exercise to study the reaction to spatial planning and it has produced new and important insights to enrich the existing body of knowledge about this wider issue. This study is modeled on a similar approach.

At the start of the Coalition government reform programme in 2010, Eric Pickles, Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government, in announcing localism, set a challenge for Town Hall officials including local planning officers,

> "... if this is going to have an effect, local government has got to be ready to step up to the plate. Seize the opportunities that are coming your way. Don't wait around for us to tell you what to do" (Pickles, 2010a)

Through the lens of local infrastructure planning and delivery, remainder of this study is dedicated to investigating how the sentiment of this statement has resonated with planning practitioners; how they have coped with the build up of the multiple layers of planning reform and the constant policy shifts over the last 16 years.

CHAPTER 4

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

<u>Introduction</u>

This chapter sets out the conceptual framework for the study. The first part of the chapter examines key theories, already highlighted in the literature review, to show in greater depth how these theories prove useful in developing and guiding the conceptual framework in this study. The chapter then summarises the findings of a series of preliminary scoping interviews with 6 planning experts and practitioners who have played a key role in the development of infrastructure planning policy and research and in the training of practitioners in England over the past 16 years. The preliminary interviews were conducted in the initial stages of the research to probe and clarify some of the issues identified in the literature review. For example, the review conducted for chapters 2 & 3 suggested that contradictory opinions could potentially be circulating in the academic and practiced based communities about the role of the local government planner in infrastructure planning. It was important, therefore, to follow these observations up to determine whether such opinions had any validity. The two components of the preparatory work described above provide a sound basis from which to develop the conceptual framework. The second part of the chapter then draws all the preparatory design work together setting out the conceptual framework along with an explanatory text.

Designing the Conceptual Framework: The Key Academic Theories

The literature review (chapter 2) explores a very wide range of academic theory relevant to the study. Certain elements of that body of literature have proved particularly useful in formulating and designing the conceptual framework. This section identifies those elements which have been most valuable for this purpose. Drawing upon the expertise and experience of the academic authors cited in this chapter has helped to stimulate ideas on the overall design of the conceptual framework. This study is not based on any one particular conceptual model but, rather, tries to draw upon ideas from a number of studies. The list of the theories and useful conceptualisations which are discussed in this section are not presented in any priority order; they cover a vast range of International, European and domestic literature and extends well beyond planning based research:-

• Integration Theory

• Communicative Planning Theory

• Network Management Theory

• Implementation Theory

• Pragmatist Literatures

• Stakeholder Theory

Integration Theory

Important precedents have been set about ways in which to study spatial planning in practice through the concept of integration within the European and domestic literture (Kidd, 2007; Stead & Meijers, 2009). Both of these studies offer different, but equally valuable, perspectives on how to study this issue. (Kidd, 2007).

> " Integration is an umbrella term that encompasses a number of dimensions. These appear to merit closer consideration in developing a deeper understanding of the nature of spatial planning" (Kidd, 2007, pp.162-163).

Kidd proposed a framework to investigate integration by adopting a model based on defined sub categories, sectoral, territorial and organisational (Kidd, 2007). According to the model, Kidd proposes that *sectoral* integration relates to the joining up of public policy domains in any given area across public, private and voluntary sectors; *territorial* integration relates to joining up within national boundaries or international territories, includes cross boundary working or coherence between neighbouring authorities; and *organisational* integration relates to co-operation between parties or people, where consideration is given to organisational arrangements such as strategic/ business plans, and the state of mind of the participants (Kidd, 2007).

Stead and Meijers (2009) similarly propose a more developmental overview of integration which suggests that integration should be regarded as a dynamic process in which there are clear developmental stages, possibly

related to improved or better advanced relationships over time, as shown in

Fig 10.

Fig 10. Integrated Policy Making, Policy Co ordination and Cooperation
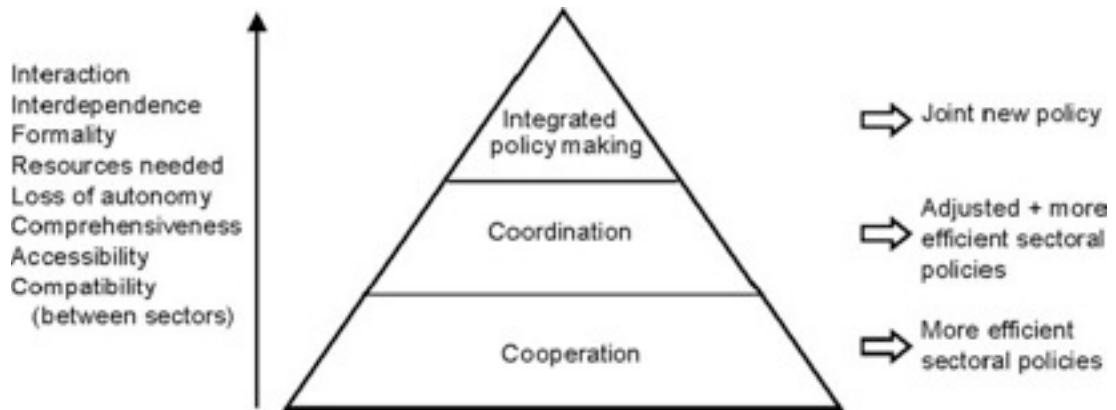
Source: Stead & Meijers (2009) p.323

Communicative Planning Theory

The design of this conceptual framework also draws upon a range of

literature related to collaboration, cooperation and consensus (Healey,1996;

Harris, 2002; Brand & Gaffkin, 2007). Collaborative planning has been

heavily criticised as being centrally focused on achieving consensus, leading

to a failure to acknowledge conflict as a factor in engagement (Flyvberg,

1998). Recent criticism of spatial planning has been based on similar issues

(Allmendinger & Haughton, 2009). The conceptual framework for this study,

therefore, seeks to explore cooperation and the relevance and importance of

consensus in the interactions between planners and stakeholder groups in

relation to infrastructure planning practice.

Conceptually, studies concerning collaboration and negotiation frequently set out to identify juxtaposed or competing forms of involvement. Investigation into the nature of negotiation (Fisher & Ury, 1981; Adams & Tiesdell, 2010, Parker & Doak, 2012) proposes that there are opposite and competing dimensions to the forms which negotiation can take, from adversarial negotiation to collaborative or integrative negotiation. A similar conceptual approach has been adopted in research into inter and intra organisational collaboration (Huxham, 1993; Huxham & Vangen, 1996; Huxham & Vangen, 2005) where two juxta-posed possible outcomes, competitive advantage and collaborative advantage, form the premise upon which to conduct an investigation. Huxham et al (2005) use the competing concepts as a way to evaluate engagement.

Studies of involvement have also been interpreted as hierarchical and involving change and transition between certain predefined stages. This type of conceptual model facilitates progression from the static "positioning" of attitudes and behaviours to accommodate the idea that attitudes can change or progress over time. This type of conceptual approach is a long established and well used model (e.g. Arnstein,1969).

Network Management Theory

Recent literature emphasises and explores the considerable implications for planning practitioners which flow from the widening conceptualisation of networks (Parker & Doak, 2012, pp.54-56). Networks and negotiation are, it is suggested, amongst the core fields of planning as a discipline (Parker & Doak, 2012, pp.45-56; ibid, pp.117-130). Parker & Doak propose a vision of the role of the planner as a "networker" in a contemporary context,

> "It is clear to us that some appreciation of the role of different actors and resources that shape planning processes and outcomes is integral to the work of planners. Awareness of the implications of actors, intermediaries and relations that shape the world and the environment is a necessary skill for planning effectively." (Parker & Doak, 2012, p56)

An integrated approach to planning suggests that a broad spectrum of agencies are envisaged to be interacting and that the range of agencies involved will extend beyond the public sector. It is important therefore to consider and draw upon information from a body of network management theory developed by European researchers (Kickert et al, 1997). Network management theory proposes that public policy is made and implemented through broad networks of interdependent public and private actors, including governmental agencies, quasi governmental bodies and private organisations. Kickert et al (1997) argue that such networks are now a fundamental characteristic of modern society. Interdependency is demonstrated through the exchange of information, goals and resources. Network management involves "co ordinating strategies of actors with different goals and preferences" (Kickert et al, 1997, p.10). Since much of the

literature from the Netherlands has been largely theoretical, it would be useful to test some of the theory empirically as part of this study, through the identification of the groupings of actors who operate with some degree of interdependency as part of an infrastructure planning network.

Implementation Theory

The body of research into the implementation of public policy is old dating back to public policy research conducted in the United States more than 40 years ago (Pressman & Wildavsky,1973). This study asked why the Oakland Job Creation Project ended in failure despite seemingly universal consensus about its necessity and the availability of funds to achieve it. Implementation research has subsequently been conducted in England through the work of Barrett & Fudge (1981), who observed that,

> " Government, whether national, regional or local
> appears to be adept at making   statements of
> intention, but what happens on the ground often falls
> a long way short of the original aspirations" (Barrett &
> Fudge, 1981, p.3).

Work on implementation theory has also diversified into the evaluation, through complex quantitative methods, of specific plans as opposed to researching policy programme directives initiated by central government (Talen, 1986a&b; Cloke, 1987; Laurian et al, 2004; Berke et al, 2006 & 2009). The study of implementation has bifurcated into competing theories of policy conformance (top down control) and performance based (bottom up) theories. There are many comprehensive summaries of the development of implementation studies and the various competing theories as they have

prevailed and evolved over time (e.g. Ryan 1995, Hill & Hupe, 2002). There have been attempts to revive implementation studies in relation to New Labour policy making (Barrett, 2004, Schofield, 2004; Kearns & Lawson, 2008) and several recent studies continue to draw upon implementation theory in the analysis of public policy making during the New Labour period (Marshall, 2009; Clifford, 2007, 2009 & 2012; Baker & Hincks, 2009; Preuss, 2011). This study also seeks to draw upon a particular aspect of the implementation theorists work. In particular, Paul Sabatier has observed in research in the US that complex and profound changes to public policy can take up to a decade before any reasonable assessment can be made of policy impacts (Sabatier, 1998).

Albrechts (2006) has made similar observations about the implementation of spatial planning in Italy, France, Spain, the Czech Republic, Belgium, the Netherlands and Australia. Albrechts commented that,

> "Although most cases demonstrate a shift from traditional technocratic statutory planning (away from the regulation of land use) towards a more collaborative and (albeit selective) actor based approach, they all still have a considerable way to go before meeting the characteristics I consider crucial for strategic spatial planning" (Albrechts, 2006, p.1166).

In this study, it is intended to test the observations of both Sabatier and Albrechts in relation to the implementation of spatial planning as contained in the New Labour planning reform programme between 1997-2010 and in the light of the Coalition reforms which have subsequently been layered onto the

English planning system. During the literature review for this study, no published research was discovered which has yet attempted to assess the layering effect of the reform programmes of two successive administrations and to study the effects of this process on practicing planners. This intention is therefore built into the conceptual framework to examine the latent effect of one series of planning reforms superimposed upon another.

Pragmatist Literature

Pragmatist literature is fundamentally based on the importance of listening to the practical experiences of practitioners and sees the study of practice as a mechanism through which theory can be rigorously reviewed, evaluated and revised. (Schon,1983; Forester,1993; Hoch, 2002; 2009; Healey, 2009). Forester described himself as,

> " A reconstructed theorist who's come to appreciate how much we can learn, intellectually and practically from carefully gathered accounts and reflections of practitioners... " (Forester, 2012, p.1)

The development of pragmatist thought owes much to the work of Donald Schon. Healey commented that no one had done more to show the power of pragmatic analysis than Schon, and that researchers should follow his recommendation to,

> " Go into the "swamp", the messy world of practice, where trial and error and experience count. Schon emphasised the significance of the way professionals practically learn about situations and become able to question the

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parameters of what they had previously understood" (Healey, 2009, p. 281)

Schon, it was suggested, had,

> " Developed a powerful account of how we can learn in action, learn from the consequences of our practical moves, and learn from our engaged attempts to change the world"
> (Forester, 2012, p.4)

The work of Schon, therefore, provides an important starting point for the conceptual model for evaluating the role of the practicing planner in relation to infrastructure planning. Schon has considered the planning profession in practice in some detail in his most well known text and provides some very specific analysis as an integral part of his wider work (Schon,1983, p. 204-235). Schon proposes that in amongst the multiple roles performed in planning practice, planners act as intermediaries, and that the role of intermediary is based on three criteria (Schon,1983, p.209)

• Understand the field of actors and interests
• Formulate issue specific targets for negotiation, mediation and enquiry
• Create conditions for successful negotiation

These three criteria offer a useful basis upon which to develop a conceptual framework for understanding integrated planning in practice.

Stakeholder Theory

This conceptual framework also recognises that what is meant by'the stakeholder' needs to be very clearly identified and understood for the purposes of this study. Analysis of the collaborative planning literature demonstrates that the term stakeholder is wide ranging and all encompassing as it includes,

> "...People, firms, pressure groups and agencies... coming to realise that they had a stake in a place and seeking a way to demand recognition of their stake" (Healey, 1998, p.7)

Subsequent studies have also assumed that the term stakeholder is very broad, arguing that a stakeholder is,

> " Any individual or group who can affect or is affected by the actions, decisions, policies, practices, or goals of the organisation" (Carroll, 1993, p.60)

Recent research into public and community participation and involvement has focussed attention on particular sub groups within this broader definition of the stakeholder group, such as public and community participation and involvement (Brownill & Carpenter, 2007) and there has been a particular interest in the political and social implications associated with the involvement of the individual or hard to reach groups in planning decisions. This focus on researching the involvement of individuals and communities has been reinforced by the recent Coalition interest in localism (Baker et al, 2010). The literature review has also highlighted the existence of other stakeholder groups including elite stakeholders (Boaden et al, 1980) and

drawn important distinctions between "organised" partners and "unorganised" partners (Leach et al, 2005). The conceptual framework for this study acknowledges and is inclusive of the full range of stakeholder groups from the individual to the major elite stakeholders. Boaden et al 1980 have defined the major elite stakeholder group as follows:-

> " Major elite stakeholders - without whose co operation or advice the local planning authority would find it difficult or even impossible to implement plans"
> (Boaden et al, 1980, cited in Baker et al, 2010, p. 577)

Moving forward from regarding the stakeholder group as one amorphous category facilitates a better understanding of all stakeholder involvement and, in particular, allows the under researched elite stakeholder category to be better understood.

Drawing the Key Academic Theories Together

This section draws together the theoretical influences which have been discussed in this chapter so far. Fig 11 shows how these theories have been drawn together to begin to develop the conceptual framework for the study.

Fig 11. Key Theories Influencing The Conceptual Framework		
Component	**Description**	**Influence**
Network	**Stakeholder Involvement / Organisational Integration** Understanding planners as part of the wider local infrastructure planning network	Schon, 1983; Boaden et al, 1980 Kidd, 2007 Hanf & Scharpf, 1978; Kickert et al, 1997; Parker & Doak, 2012
Agenda	**Policy Integration** Understanding the policy issues between planners and infrastructure providers	Schon, 1983; Kidd, 2007
Engagement	**Attitudinal Change** Understanding prevailing attitudes and approaches towards engagement between planners and infrastructure providers, and assessing attitudinal change, cooperation and consensus	Fisher & Ury,1981 Healey, 1998 Stead & Meijers, 2009 Huxham & Vangen, 2005 Brand & Gaffkin, 2007

(Source: Author)

Fig 11. shows that the three criteria developed by Schon (1983), network, agenda and engagement are the three key criteria which are fundamental within the Conceptual Framework for this study (see Fig 12 later in this chapter for a full description of the model which has been developed). Network, Agenda and Engagement are the criteria which are applied throughout this study, in the two empirical chapters, and the concluding analysis in Chapter 8. Fig 11 also explains the particular meaning and definitions attached to these criteria for the purposes of this study, see the 'description' category in Fig 11. The 'Influences' category in Fig 11 highlights the academic literature which have prompted the formulation of each criteria. This brief summary section and the overview in Fig 11 therefore completes the first stage in the design of the conceptual framework. As explained in the introduction, the second stage in designing the conceptual framework is based upon a series of interviews with experts which are described in the following section.

<u>Designing the Conceptual Framework: Scoping Interviews</u>

The comments in this section are drawn from a series of preliminary scoping interviews conducted in stage 1 of the research in the summer of 2011 and also from a group discussion which subsequently took place with one of the stakeholder agencies in stage 3. Further details about the scoping exercise as a whole and all 7 participants (referred to as Stage 1 of the research methodology) and stages 2 & 3 of the research strategy are provided in Chapter 5. One of the purposes of the stage 1 interviews was to canvass the views of a number of experts on the theory and practice of infrastructure planning. The comments highlighted in this section are designed to provide a base-line assessment about emerging approaches towards infrastructure practice and the value placed on the role of the planner in relation to infrastructure delivery. In this section each of the 'experts' whose comments have been used is identifiable numerically within the following text as Expert 1-6.

The following section provides a brief description of the background experience for each of the interviewees:-

• *Expert 1*: Senior member of the Planning Advisory Service (PAS)

• *Expert 2*: Planning academic, practitioner and consultant in infrastructure planning

• *Expert 3*: Planning academic, and former regional planning practitioner

• *Expert 4*: Former president of the Planning Officers Society, former chief planning officer

• *Expert 5*: Senior officer of a local authority in Merseyside

• *Expert 6*: Principal planner in a private water company

All of the individuals concerned have a high level of expertise in planning, either from an academic or practitioner perspective; in some instances they have a combination of both. The first five participants, in particular, have had an instrumental role in the implementation of government planning policy since the early 2000's, and are commonly regarded to be amongst the key implementors in relation to government planning policy in England. Experts 5 and 6 are both practitioners, who, respectively, offer a public and private sector perspective on the implementation of infrastructure planning. This section compares and contrasts their comments and perceptions and exposes significant differences in the way they have understood, interpreted, communicated and experienced operational relationships between local authority planners; their corporate partners; other neighbouring local authorities; community groups; and infrastructure providers from all sectors. The observations which emerge from the interviews have been used to inform, and help frame the conceptual framework, as explained in the final section of this chapter.

Expert 1

A detailed face to face interview was conducted with "Expert 1", a senior member of the Planning Advisory Service, on 17th June 2011. A comprehensive written response summarising key points which had been made during the interview and confirming the interviewee's definition of key infrastructure planning terms was provided on 20 June 2011 and in follow up email conversations which took place on 20 July 2011. "Expert 1" has been instrumental in the design and delivery of PAS training for planning practitioners nationally, and was also one of twelve experts who formed the

steering group of the Effective Practice in Spatial Planning project, which took place in 2007. The remit and findings of the EPiSP are fully explained and discussed in the literature review for this study and, at this point, it is sufficient to point out that the EPiSP was charged with exploring the level to which the New Labour Government's legislative and policy framework had been implemented.

"Expert 1" was asked to provide a personal interpretation of the distinction between an Infrastructure Delivery Plan (IDP) and infrastructure planning (IP). The following is a segment of the written response,

> " To me an Infrastructure Delivery Plan (IDP) is a corporate/ partnership plan to deliver the common vision for the area by integrating all the development proposals to make the best use of resources available now and for the future (aka spatial planning?). It should be clearly set out and regularly updated by partners and be the key driver for the core strategy. Infrastructure delivery planning (IP) is the act of preparing an IDP (above definition) and what all the service providers in an area do to produce their service plans" (Expert 1; Email 20th June, 2011)

"Expert 1" also went on to point out the differences in understanding of both terms between the corporate bodies of local authorities and local authority planners.

> " Planners refer to IDP to cover the infra{structure} work they do to prepare their DPDs and use it to mean planning and plan. In most cases when planners talk about having an IDP for their core strategy - they are referring to a schedule of infrastructure projects which they use to demonstrate the deliverability of their plan. Mostly planners are not included in

the corp. IP/IDP described above. " (Expert 1, email, 20th June, 2011)

In making these important distinctions between the role of the corporate level and planners within the local authority, "Expert 1" appears to attribute primacy in infrastructure planning to the corporate level of local authorities, and clearly suggests that potentially a gap could exist or develop in the way the corporate level and local planners operate, interact with others, and communicate with each other about infrastructure planning work. Both during the interview and in written responses, "Expert 1" went on to explain that the escalation in corporate level infrastructure planning activity was a result of the increased sense of urgency felt by local authorities to respond to the worsening economic situation and was focussed upon the development of improved asset management plans and capital programmes.

Discussions with "Expert 1" also suggest that the role of planners in infrastructure planning is constrained and limited by planners themselves to the production of a schedule of infrastructure planning projects.

> "(Thought: As all LAs need to have infra{structure} schedules to support their core strategies, it would be interesting to know if the corp{orate} centre is using this evidence to support and develop a more joined up approach to IP and to prepare an IDP. This could be a means of getting planners a place at the corp. big table) (Expert 1 interview 17th June 2011; Expert 1 email, 20th June, 2011)

Operational relationships between local authorities (including planners) and the wider network of service providers, including external provider agencies, was also explored with Expert 1. Expert 1 suggested that there is no clear understanding about how to develop these operational relationships, or how to circulate the information for the benefit of the local authority as a whole.

> " ... {*In the draft survey*} ...You ask about the relationship with service providers, I would be interested to know what they do with the info{rmation} they get from the partners - do they share it with them {*rest of the local authority*} i.e. is it corp data and is it valued and used by the partners?" (Expert 1 interview 20th June 2011; Expert 1 email 20th July, 2011)

There is little or no information or previous research which has so far examined the extended infrastructure planning network despite its pivotal importance to successful infrastructure delivery. "Expert 1" confirmed that there is an the urgent need for the engagement between the key actors and the wider network to be investigated and better understood (Expert 1, interview 20th June 2011)

The views of Expert 1 suggest that the manner in which spatial planning principles and infrastructure planning requirements have been communicated to planners has the potential to be open to considerable interpretation. There are however dangers in making sweeping generalisations on the basis of these comments. "Expert 1" is only one individual, and it is not necessarily the case that all planning practitioners now act as if the planning function is somehow ring fenced and operates independently from the corporate centre on infrastructure planning. However, questions do arise from the comments made, and these issues need to be more fully explored through further

detailed discussion with the planners themselves to understand how they are, in reality, trying to apply the principles of spatial planning to become more innovative and proactive in their approaches to the delivery of infrastructure with their local authority partners and the wider circle of infrastructure providers external to the authority.

Expert 2

Expert 2 is a planning academic, practitioner and consultant in infrastructure planning. The following summary has been derived from a series of interviews and emails as part of an ongoing dialogue which took place throughout 2011. "Expert 2" has also been personally involved in EPiSP and in training and communicating with local authorities and local authority planners to develop infrastructure practice. Comparing the two sets of comments provided by Experts 1 & 2, suggests some divergence of opinion about the extent of planner involvement in infrastructure planning and the degree to which they interact with corporate colleagues on the issue.

When asked about the role of Local Authority Planners vis a vis their corporate colleagues Expert 2 gave a slightly different perspective. (Expert 2, email, 28 June 2011). Expert 2 suggested that planners were much more "in the loop" in terms of working with the wider local authority on infrastructure planning. In addition, and contrary to the views of the previous interviewee, Expert 2 had found that there was limited corporate interest on the issue in some instances.

The variations in opinion between Experts 1 and 2 are to some extent an inevitable consequence of personal experience. The two experts have clearly developed a very well informed understanding of the operational issues in a number of specific local authorities, and picked up on the different approaches which are particular to those locations and individuals.

The differences between these two experts, however, suggests that they view infrastructure planning and the role of the planner somewhat differently. As a result, further interviews were conducted with a more extensive pool of other academics and practitioners to canvass opinion and experience more widely.

Expert 3

Expert 3 is a planning academic with a specialist knowledge of infrastructure planning for major projects and former regional planning practitioner. Interviews took place with "Expert 3" on 6th June 2011 and 28th June, 2011. During these interviews, the revocation of the regional tier of planning was mooted as justification for the argument that local planning authorities were of little significance to the future of infrastructure planning. Expert 3 considered infrastructure planning, as conducted by local authorities corporately, would provide a richer pool of research material about local infrastructure delivery (Expert 3, interview 6th June, 2011). The discussions with Expert 3 provided further evidence to support observations made in the literature review, i.e. that planning researchers have focused primarily upon major infrastructure planning and nationally significant projects (see Chapter 2).

Expert 4

Expert 4 is a former president of the Planning Officers Society, and former chief planning officer. Telephone interviews and emails were conducted with this expert in August, 2011). In sharp contrast to the opinions expressed by Expert 3, Expert 4 stressed the importance of the role of the planner in spatial planning and particularly in infrastructure planning. Expert 4 explained that the Planning Officers Society have been conducting extensive training for local planners through their regional members groups and through private consultancy services on the subject of infrastructure planning and spatial planning (Expert 4, telephone interview and email, August, 2011). "Expert 4" expressed the view that planners were intended to perform an integral function in the context of a wider infrastructure network. "Expert 4" had direct experience of the level of interest amongst planners and their commitment to developing and improving the quality of infrastructure planning with the planning profession, and cited the number of planners expressing an interest in attending the extensive programme of training courses as evidence to support this view. (Expert 4, telephone interview, August 2011)

Expert 5

Expert 5 is a senior officer of a Borough Council in the North West Region of England. Interviews, arranged at the suggestion of "Expert 3", provided some insight from the perspective of those currently involved in day to day operational planning practice in the public sector. "Expert 5" explained that planners in the authority were, in principle, interested in working much more proactively with corporate colleagues and exchanging information about infrastructure planning, but this type of approach was in the early

experimental stages of development in their particular authority, and very much linked to the existence of inspirational individuals who were prepared to innovate and drive new approaches.

Expert 6

Expert 6 is a principal planner with a private water company. Initial interviews took place in 2011 as part of the more detailed research explained in Chapter 7. This expert has direct experience of liaising with local planning practitioners on the delivery of water infrastructure. A detailed summary of the views of Expert 6, which reflect the corporate opinions of the water company are presented in chapter 7. In essence, Expert 6 stressed the importance of engagement with planners and the need to develop better ways to liaise with them effectively in the preparatory stages of the core strategy.

In summary, therefore, this commentary exposes interesting differences between the experts concerning the way infrastructure planning operates in practice. The views of these experts also shows that there is no clear understanding or consensus about the role of the local authority planner in infrastructure planning in the context of the wider local authority structure, or vis a vis the network of agencies involved in the delivery of infrastructure. All the experts who have been interviewed have had direct involvement with local authorities and have either participated in, or provided, training across the country. They have all detected very wide ranging differences in approach and some of them may have been instrumental in communicating and actively nurturing some of the differences through the advice and training they have been offering.

The evidence from these personal observations suggests, potentially, that there is a lack of clarity about the purpose of infrastructure planning which permeates current planning practice. There would appear to be no clear impression of the extent to which key actors work in networks to support each other to plan for infrastructure in a co ordinated way, and an extremely variable approach amongst local authorities across the country.

As explained in Chapter 3, although the New Labour Government attempted to reinforce the importance of infrastructure planning practice through further legislation in 2008, it is unclear whether practicing planners and the network of infrastructure providers and partners have responded positively and redoubled their own efforts locally to achieve effective engagement. Since 2010, the new Coalition Government has very firmly and clearly restated the importance of integrated policy making through the primacy of the local plan in sustainable strategy making and the need for more effective and innovative working practices to be developed between planners and all sectors not least the business sector. The final part of this chapter therefore goes on to explain how the variability in interpretations detected amongst the planning experts can be utilised to help refine the conceptual framework which underpins the stated aims and objectives of this study.

This concludes the description of the developmental work which has been conducted on the conceptual aspects of this study. The preceding sections have highlighted the key academic theories (brought together in Fig 11), and summarised a series of interviews with academic and practice based experts in infrastructure planning in England. This developmental and investigative

work was conducted in the preliminary stages of the study and all of this exploratory work has influenced and shaped the design of the conceptual framework. The focus of this chapter now turns to a comprehensive description of the conceptual framework which has subsequently been formulated.

The Conceptual Framework

The diagram in Fig 12. outlines the conceptual framework for this study. (Reference should be made to Fig 11 for further details about the background and theoretical underpinnings described in Fig 12). The conceptual diagram proposes a multi dimensional framework designed to examine integrated planning using the three criteria which are, as the remainder of this section explains, rooted in established research and policy framework. The three criteria to be applied are,

• Network - Concerned with the issue of organisational integration

• Agenda - Concerned with understanding policy integration

• Engagement - Concerned with communication between stakeholders

The conceptual framework proposed has been designed to have a general applicability to the study of English planning in practice, but in the context of this study, the framework has been used to examine infrastructure planning within local planning practice; hence the term infrastructure is used in brackets in the diagram in Fig 12.

The framework in Fig 12. is intended to generate a snapshot of current practice, capturing an insight into the way infrastructure planning is practiced at a particular point in time. The conceptual model could be applied

iteratively, repeating the same conceptual approach at regular intervals on an

ongoing basis in future research projects. It therefore provides a framework

through which to measure the progress which is subsequently made by

practitioners as they work towards strengthening integrated local practices.

Fig 12. Conceptual Framework

1. Network

LOCAL INFRASTRUCTURE PLANNING NETWORK
(ENCOMPASSING PUBLIC, PRIVATE, COMMUNITY, VOLUNTARY SECTORS)

LOCAL AUTHORITY

NEIGHBOURING
AUTHORITIES

CORPORATE
TEAM

LA
DEPTS

**FORWARD
PLANNING
TEAM**

**OTHER KEY
INFRASTRUCTURE
PROVIDERS**
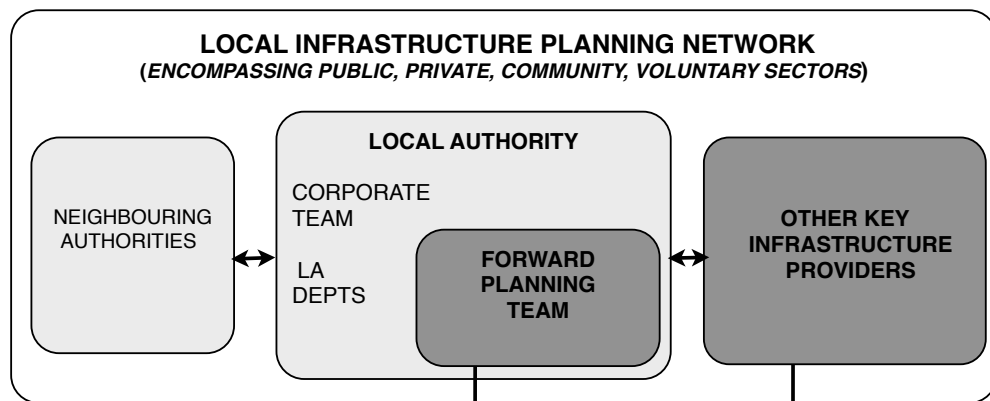
2. Agenda

• Identifying key issues and show stoppers affecting the local plan

• Identifying the key (infrastructure) stakeholder agencies and partnerships
  responsible for delivering specific projects

• Understanding divergences between the local plan and key infrastructure
  providers on the following:-
- policies and investment strategies
- regulatory environments
- timescales for provision of infrastructure projects

3.Engagement

Phase

Progression Through Local Development Framework Process

Pre Adoption   Post Adoption

Approach

Independent / Adversarial   Integrated / Collaborative
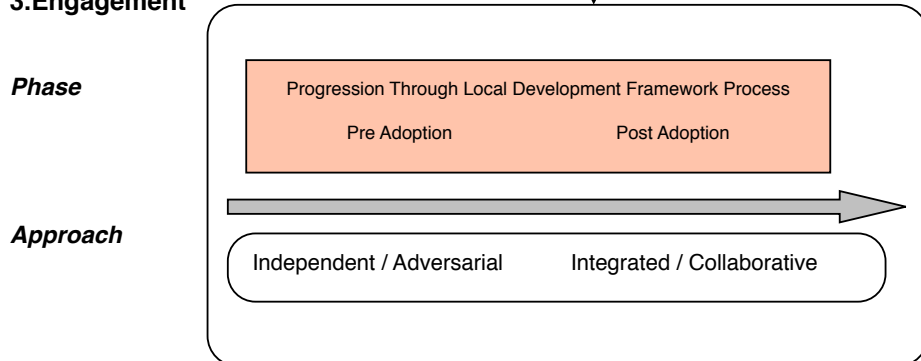
Network

The network component of the conceptual framework in Fig 12 is designed to explore the issue of organisational integration. Drawing on information gathered from the literature review and discussions conducted as part of the preliminary interview process, it has been possible to devise a representation of the wider local infrastructure planning network which identifies the spectrum of intersectoral organisational groups within which all stakeholders are expected to operate. In infrastructure planning, the network includes: forward planning teams; development management planners; the corporate centre of the local authority; neighbouring local authorities; local community groups of all types; and the broad spectrum of other infrastructure service providers and agencies from the public, private and voluntary sectors.

From this, it is possible to identify particular groups and assess the level to which they are embedded and involved in the wider network. Representing the wider local network in this way also graphically demonstrates the complexity of the interaction which takes place between all the actors from all sectors on infrastructure planning. All the subgroups shown in the network are likely to discuss infrastructure planning in a wide variety of sectoral situations and forums which do not include all the participant groups simultaneously. In the context of this study this component is particularly intended to understand the level of involvement forward planning teams and external stakeholders have, not just in the local authority structure but in a wider network.

The involvement of forward planners with some of the groups identified in the wider network has already been the subject of some published research. Lambert (2006) focused on evaluating the integrative capacity between local authority planners and Local Strategic Partnerships. More recently, Morphet has considered in detail how planners interact within the wider local authority network (see Chapter 3) and has latterly begun to consider how planners might work with Local Enterprise Partnerships (Morphet, 2011b&c). These existing studies concentrate on the way local planners work with particular groups rather than the broad spectrum of public, private and voluntary sector agencies represented in Fig 12. The conceptual framework is intended to provide a better insight into the working of the public sector. It will establish whether local authorities are sharing and exchanging all forms of relevant information more widely with the corporate centre, other local authorities, and other infrastructure providers.

This approach has a number of other benefits, the network component will provide information to resolve questions posed in the expert interviews about the conflicting interpretation of the role of the LPA within the local authority. In addition, designing a conceptual approach to assess current levels of involvement, allows for the key recommendations from the SPiP research project to be taken forward (DCLG, 2008a). SPiP recommended that improved delivery of local plans depends upon local authorities developing ways to identify the key agencies from all sectors with whom they needed to interact to coordinate infrastructure delivery (DCLG, 2008b). However, at the time the SPiP project was conducted, there had only been a limited amount

of opportunity for planners to initiate an approach to infrastructure planning and develop more integrated working partnerships with key agencies.

Taking a wide ranging view of the local infrastructure planning network helps to establish more comprehensively whether local planners work in an integrated way with stakeholders across all sectors. The scale of the task for local planning authorities in simply making contact with stakeholders is substantial. Early estimates produced at the time spatial planning was introduced into the English planning system, estimated that local authority planners would have to engage with more that 100 different stakeholder organisations (ODPM, 2004a). More recently, further work has been done to begin to formulate a checklist of the potential infrastructure organisational categories (Morphet, 2011a, pp. 146-150). The list produced by Morphet covers all forms of infrastructure; physical, green, social and community. This study uses this established research information as a template against which to examine the extensiveness of the organisational contacts which are now being established in practice.

Recent Scandinavian research suggests that planners exert considerable influence over which organisations become stakeholders through their role in informing potential stakeholder groups; planners frequently have to publicise and raise awareness about planning issues and initiatives with groups and agencies who might have an interest (Metzger, 2013). It is important therefore to be mindful of these findings in shaping this conceptual framework.

The Network component of Fig 12, also focuses particular attention on understanding the collaborative capacity between local authority planners and the elite stakeholder group (Baker et al, 2010). Adapting to an integrated planning approach raises an expectation that planners must potentially forge links with numerous agencies which fall into the elite category; in this context, an 'elite stakeholder' is defined as any agency whose input is considered essential for local plan implementation.

An integrated planning approach requires planners to co-ordinate infrastructure. It is, therefore, important to understand the extent to which planners are beginning to establish contact across the sectoral spectrum of providers as this offers an important starting point from which to conduct more detailed research into the ability of planners to co ordinate infrastructure needs and requirements.

Whilst existing policy guidance and academic literature offers some indication about the scale of organisations contacts required, research which examines the co ordination of infrastructures by planners is limited. Embarking on a process to understand whether planners have begun to co ordinate infrastructure needs and requirements is important for a number of reasons. Co-ordination is central to negotiating funding arrangements between delivery partners (Morphet, 2011c, p10). Coordination is also a concept which underpins the spatial arrangements of infrastructure to support site specific development. For example, Rozee (2010) suggests that the interrelationship between new housing development and the importance of the provision of shops, schools, services and transport is an important component in

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researching sustainability. Gathering basic data which shows how planners are developing contacts across all relevant provider agencies will help to clarify the degree to which planners are progressing towards improving co ordination.

Agenda

This segment of the conceptual framework explores the question of policy integration as it applies to the organisational network for infrastructure planning outlined in the previous section. A review of the existing literature has established that policy integration has multiple dimensions (Wong, 2002; Cowell & Martin, 2003; Kidd, 2007). The value to be derived from strengthening policy integration between planning and other infrastructure stakeholder agencies has also been demonstrated in relation to specific sectors and their respective policy domains; for example concerning health policy and water resource management (Kidd, 2007; Kidd & Shaw, 2007). The 'agenda' component of this conceptual framework draws upon these literatures and seeks to apply the previous research findings to the study of planner relationships and infrastructure delivery.

The established literature on policy integration has been used as a guide which has helped to identify the facets of policy integration which apply to the infrastructure planning network. There are three integrative dimensions which apply to the network for this study: horizontal integration at the local level; cross sectoral integration because it facilitates an examination which cuts across public policy domains; and inter agency integration between the public private and voluntary sectors. Examining all three of these facets of policy

integration between planners, and all the sectors and agencies included in the wider organisational network, is clearly not feasible in one single study. The aim in the agenda component of the conceptual framework is therefore to focus on policy integration between local authority planners and the infrastructure provider agencies who are in the elite stakeholder group. As explained in the literature review and the earlier parts of this chapter, the elite stakeholder group, are those stakeholders who have a critical role to perform if Local Planning Authorities are to adopt and implement plans successfully.

The elite stakeholder group for infrastructure planning potentially includes a vast array of organisations and agencies. Conceptually, therefore, the study needs to be more narrowly focused into an examination of partnership between the planners and certain key organisations. The conceptual framework diagram shows that narrowing the research focus down further would facilitate a better understanding of the types of agenda issues which exist between local authority planners and these key agencies.

Previous research studies have identified the potential challenges associated with the infrastructure delivery agenda (Haughton et al, 2007; DCLG, 2008b) The report produced by Haughton et al in 2007 for the ESRC pointed to agenda mismatches between local planning authorities and infrastructure provider agencies. The report restated the concerns which had been raised in earlier research by Allmendinger & Haughton (2006); this earlier work is cited and discussed in greater detail in Chapter 2.

The SPiP research (DCLG, 2008b) also suggested other important agenda based challenges:-

- Identifying and prioritising the key infrastructure related issues necessary to achieve the stated vision described in the local plan

- The need for greater clarity in identifying the key partnerships and agencies responsible for delivering specific projects and proposals

- Mediating and co ordinating the activities of key agencies to ensure their willingness and ability to deliver the relevant infrastructure requirements of the LDF

This study is designed to explore these challenges in more depth, to understand how they present in a practical sense between planners and key infrastructure provider agencies in day to day situations, and to shed more light on what efforts are being made to resolve them.

All of this earlier research into policy integration in spatial planning had previously been conducted prior to the revocation of the regional strategic tier,

> "Given their role in providing the context for Local Development Frameworks, the government has encouraged speedy preparation of the new style RSSs. Consequently, regional planners are at the forefront of efforts to engage with the integration issues presented by the new era of spatial planning in England. (Kldd, 2007, p 168)

This current study is, therefore, also being designed to consider how planners from individual authorities engage with provider agencies in the absence of regional strategic planning any broader region wide strategic input.

Engagement

The third component of the conceptual framework is designed to examine the prevailing culture and attitudes of both local authority planners and key agencies involved in infrastructure provision (see Fig 12). The aim is to understand how individuals in these organisations think, behave and operate in their current daily practice, and to establish whether the organisational culture for planning and stakeholder agencies facilitates integrated planning of infrastructure.

The academic literature concerning the introduction of spatial planning into the planning system in England has consistently placed great importance on the need for culture change as part of the implementation process (Nadin,

2006; Shaw, 2006; Shaw & Lord, 2007). Culture change in this context, and with particular reference to the implementation of local development frameworks, has been defined as,

> " A change in the way those involved in spatial planning work and relate to each other" (Shaw & Lord, 2007, p. 63).

The cultural changes associated with spatial planning and contained in planning legislation therefore have implications not just for planners, but for all the organisations and agencies included in the infrastructure planning network.

> "Whilst an internal local authority environment that is supportive of spatial planning is an important and necessary local organizational precondition for culture change, in itself this is unlikely to be sufficient in bringing about change in anticipated outcomes. The relationship that the local authority has with external stakeholders, including statutory consultees, the development industry, local community interests, the local strategic partnerships etc., is also going to be a critical conditioning factor in shaping whether the new spatial planning system can be successful in delivering its intended outcomes. How these external relationships are managed, whether these organizations have the necessary understanding and capacity to effectively engage with the new system and whether conflicting aspirations and expectations can be managed will be challenges that need to be addressed, not just by the LDF teams, but also all the other actors and agencies that interact with the new system.
>
> It is this wider involvement of so many other stakeholders in the spatial planning process that makes culture change in planning so difficult and challenging." (Shaw & Lord, 2007, p.75)

It has been suggested, for example, that statutory consultees,

> "Will also have to adjust the way they work, especially in terms of the issue of front-loading and the extent to which they have the capacity to engage with all LDF and other planning projects and processes" (Shaw & Lord, 2007, p. 71)

The engagement component of the conceptual framework also addresses important, yet largely unexplored questions about the timing of the cultural changes associated with spatial planning. It is widely acknowledge the literature that it takes time for any organisation to understand spatial planning and to make any appropriate cultural adjustments,

> "{An}..issue that is not fully discussed in the literature is how long does, or should, a cultural transformation take before significant changes in the outcomes can be observed?" (Shaw & Lord, 2007, p.76)

This study seeks to examine the cultural transformations which have taken place over the period since spatial planning was first introduced into the planning system in England over a decade ago.

Cultural change needs to be understood, not just in planning but also in a specific group of infrastructure provider agencies. Very little is known about the manner in which local authority planners have been approaching the task of engaging with infrastructure service provider agencies. There are several explanations for this, such as the general lack of progress with plan making in the last 10-12 years, and the consequent lack of research material to explore. Perhaps one of the most significant reasons why there has been no

progress in researching implementation relates to the complexity which is

suggested in the early academic literature, which,

> "Suggests that local cultures are context specific
> and vary considerably from place to place." (Shaw
> & Lord, 2007 p.65)

The conceptual framework for this study is designed to try to respond to

some of the questions posed in the academic literature. This stage of the

conceptual framework also draws upon a wide range of the academic

literature which has been discussed in the literature review. An Australian

study of stakeholder engagement (Legacy, 2010) has drawn an important

distinction between stakeholder engagement and stakeholder deliberation.

The study identifies an important difference in the level of engagement

between stakeholders. The key message of the research is that there are

levels of contact and interaction ranging from superficial contact to

meaningful on going face to face dialogue and negotiation.

Establishing what is an acceptable timeframe for implementation is also

closely linked to the suggestion in the literature that some level of transition

or progress is made over a period of time.

> "The scope for integration exists along a spectrum from
> informing parties and neighbours to jointly developing
> goals and strategies" (Shaw & Lord, 2007, p.71)

The conceptual framework therefore draws upon the theories put forward by

various academics which assert that engagement itself progresses through a

hierarchy of increasingly more advanced stages over time as relationships

between the stakeholders is seen to prove more beneficial to all parties

involved (Stead & Meijers, 2009)

Conclusions

This chapter proposes a conceptual model for examining the way in which

practitioners work on infrastructure as part of their every day practice within

the local planning system. The model is concerned with 3 aspects of

integrated planning, organisational relationships (network); policy coherence

(agenda) and the nature of planner & stakeholder interaction (engagement).

The model draws on existing planning literature as well as the views and

experiences of 6 planning experts who have been directly involved in English

local infrastructure planning. As explained at the beginning of the chapter, the

arena within which local practitioners operate in contemporary English

planning has a 'spatial planning' foundation, originally introduced by New

Labour. However, Coalition policy changes do not dismantle spatial planning

per se, even if the term is not used in the latest planning policy statements.

Academic literature similarly continues to promote an integrated form of

planning through policy coherence, coordination and cooperation. The

direction of Coalition policy thus invites local planning practice to use their

own initiative and work in a more innovative way to make planning

responsive and effective whilst continuing to stress the need for an integrated

planning approach.

This environment for local planning leaves something of a blank page for practitioners to work with. However, to date, there has been limited direct consultation with local practitioners to determine how they have responded to all the challenges and opportunities created by both New Labour and the Coalition reforms. As explained in Chapter One recent research in the United States, (Peck, 2012), has demonstrated that there is great value in studying the ways in which local practitioners have coped with the effects of austerity. Peck has described a scenario, played out at the local level, which is based on crisis management and short term fixes. The conceptual model proposed in this chapter is designed to understand how local practitioners in England work on infrastructure planning, determine the extent to which this activity is founded on an integrated approach across organisational and policy boundaries, and to understand how engagement between practitioners occurs in the fiscally challenged economic environment in England. The conceptual model outlined in this chapter has been developed into a robust research methodology, which is explained in detail in the next chapter (Chapter 5) and subsequently applied in the empirical work which is described in chapters 6 and 7.

CHAPTER 5

METHODOLOGY:
ACHIEVING DIALOGUE WITH PRACTITIONERS

Introduction

This chapter explains how the research strategy for the study was developed,

and subsequently operationalised. This study is firmly focussed on investigating

contemporary infrastructure planning practice as it is currently conducted by

practitioners in the local planning system in England. The methodology is based

on seeking to consult extensively with practitioners across England and open up

an active dialogue with a secondary group of practitioners in the North West

region. The practitioners who are the subject of this study fall into two groups,

local authority planners and stakeholders with an interest and involvement in

infrastructure issues within the local planning system. The research ambitions of

this study set methodological challenges in addressing the scope and scale of

consultation with local government employees struggling against a tide of public

sector spending cuts and redundancy, and delving into the competitive world of

private sector commercial practices. There are clearly numerous ways in which

the research strategy could have been designed; this study has adopted a

mixed methods approach to consult widely with practitioners across the country

and to complement this with face to face discussions in one particular region.

This chapter explains the interrelationships between each of the methodological

components to demonstrate that, holistically, the research strategy is sufficiently

robust to canvass sufficient practitioner interest and involvement and secure

high quality cross sectoral feedback. The methodology chapter also

incorporates the aim and the objectives which have been set and outlines a series of associated research questions.

In developing the research strategy a wide selection of the literature on applied social research methods has been considered and has provided useful initial guidance. Some of the more notable examples include (Creswell, 2009; Blackie, 2000; Babbie, 2001; Mason, 2002; Robson, 2011) and these are discussed at the relevant points within this chapter. Specialised literatures have also been explored and investigated, on mixed methods research (Bryman, 1988 & 2006), multi method research (McKendrick, 1999) and combining quantitative and qualitative approaches to social research (Philip, 1998). Literature on conducting elite interviewing and focus groups and group conversations has also been fully considered and is cited later in the text.

The Importance of Practice Based Research

The value of researching how practitioners operate in practice has been well established for several decades (Lipsky,1980; Schon,1983) and has been further endorsed in very recent research into the experiences of local authority planners in the UK following the introduction of spatial planning (Clifford & Tewdwr-Jones, 2013). Direct insights into practice have also been shown to have great value in exploring how local practitioners are responding to the impact of the latest period of economic crisis and fiscal retrenchment in the United States (Peck, 2012).

Close examination of practice is necessary to understand the extent to which front-line practitioners interpret, influence, and control policy implementation, rather than simply execute directives, particularly in pressured, challenging circumstances. A reading of these previously published consultative studies provides a unique perspective which has the potential to enrich the wider body of academic study. Lipsky's work describes, "corrupted worlds of service" (Lipsky, 1980); Schon (1983) refers to 'the messy world of practice". Clifford & Tewdwr-Jones (2013) highlight the way that local authority planners can become overwhelmed and swamped as a result of a continuous steam of directives and guidance from central government. Peck (2012) describes a harsh, contested and challenging environment. These studies of professional practice also highlighted the artistry of practice, practical competence, and the absolute necessity for learning and improvisation in real world situations as an integral part of professional development.

> "The mismatches between professional knowledge and the changing character of the situations of practice - the complexity, uncertainly, instability, uniqueness and value conflicts which are increasingly perceived as central to the world of professional practice" (Schon, 1983, p. 14)

All of these insights into practice make an investigation into practice an intriguing and rewarding methodological endeavour. This study is firmly anchored in the sentiment that establishing a direct dialogue with practitioners has enormous research value. Such an exercise is, however, not easy; designing research which gains practitioner trust; captures the views, attitudes and experiences of individuals working in politically charged and financially

pressured situations; and doing so accurately, efficiently and comprehensively is a key challenge acknowledged throughout this chapter. The studies cited here have also concentrated largely on public sector workers, whereas it is the intention of this study to consult with both the public and private sector officials who are part of the practitioner network for infrastructure delivery.

Ethical Issues

In addition to the potential benefits associated with practice based research there are also important ethical considerations which must be taken into account. There is a responsibility on the researcher to ensure that all prospective participants fully understand the purpose of the research and appreciate the reasons why they are being approached for comment. Researchers must also ensure that participants have given informed consent to taking part either verbally or in writing. It is also important for the researcher to fully address the anonymisation of any information provided where this is relevant and appropriate. In this study consultation with practitioners has taken place through semi structured interviews, questionnaires, and group discussions. This section explains how the relevant ethical issues have been addressed.

A series of semi-structured interviews took place in the very early stages of the research for scoping purposes (referred to throughout this study as Stage 1 of the research strategy). All of the individuals who were approached for interview at that stage were practitioners with considerable knowledge and expertise in infrastructure planning. All those approached gave their full consent to taking part. They all expressed their willingness to give an informed insight into their

own perspectives on various aspects of infrastructure planning policy to help to develop the aims and objectives of the study. Some of these individuals subsequently provided written material to corroborate their interview comments, clarify their views and restate the opinions they were communicating widely in training sessions and through their consultative work. As the information provided was, at that time, being freely communicated in other public settings it was not considered necessary to regard the content of the interviews as being of a sensitive nature. None of those who took part asked for any of their comments, verbal or written, to be treated as confidential. Where material from these early interviews has been used in this thesis the identities of the individuals concerned have been anonymised because such action is considered to be good practice in the context of real world research situations (Robson, 2011). There are also a number of challenges associated with the anonymisation process for this study. For example alluding to 'experts' in chapters 4 & 5 has made it necessary to provide some general information about an individual's background and experience. Any form of descriptive text about an individual increases the chances that the person could be identified. In this study participants have been anonymised as a general rule and care has been taken to strike a workable balance where any information has been given about the persons background and expertise.

The two sets of survey participants received full written details explaining the nature and purpose of the study (see appendices 1, 2, 3 & 4). The Survey Test Exercise involved approaches to 9 individuals working in 7 different local authorities (see Fig 16). There was 100% response to the Survey Test Exercise with all 9 people providing very helpful and detailed responses. All 9 of the people consulted gave their full consent to the information being used in the study and specifically requested that their individual local authorities were acknowledged as participants.

The national survey of planners which is the subject of chapter 6 attracted a total of 197 responses. The responses of all participants in the national survey have been fully anonymised in this study in strict accordance with the guidance notes which accompanied the survey questionnaire when it was launched. Participants are only personally identifiable within the data analysis process via their individual IP addresses, and all information from the survey has been anonymised in the commentary provided in chapter 6. However it should also be noted that a total of 76 (38.5%) of those who took part in the national survey have voluntarily provided contact details in response to an offer, made at the end of the questionnaire, to provide them with feedback on the survey results.

The content of the group discussions, which acts as the basis of chapter 7, was recorded and used in this study with the full prior permission of each of the participating agencies. All of the members of staff who took part in the group discussions were given written details explaining the purpose of the study and a short introductory presentation at the being of the exercise. All participants confirmed that they understood the purpose of the research and were invited to

ask questions if they needed further clarification. Where employees comments are used the identities of individuals have been protected within the analysis in chapter 7.

Research Aim and Objectives

The research aim and the 4 objectives have been summarised in Chapter 1. The objectives are explained in more detail here, using a number of research questions.

Research Aim

To investigate infrastructure planning within the English local planning system between 1997-2013 and to determine whether local authority planning professionals and infrastructure stakeholders achieve cooperation, coordination and policy coherence in their day to day operational practice. In order to achieve this aim, four objectives have been set, each of which is substantiated further by a number of research questions.

Objective One:

To review the existing academic, legislative and policy literature in order to understand the context for infrastructure planning with the English local planning system and clarify the role of the practitioners.

- *What are the key influences which have shaped English local planning over the past decade?*

- *How has infrastructure planning been studied in the international academic literature?*

- *How has the role of the planning professional and stakeholder been perceived?*

Objective Two:

To assess the involvement of local authority planners in infrastructure planning across England.

- *Is infrastructure planning widely practiced by local authority planners in England?*

- *Who are local authority planners interacting with to deliver the infrastructure necessary to support local plans, and how extensive is the network?*

- *What are the priority infrastructure needs in the delivery of local plans?*

- *What is the attitude amongst planners towards engagement with infrastructure provider agencies?*

- *What have been the obstacles and inhibitors to the development of local infrastructure planning?*

Objective Three:

To investigate the collaborative capacity between local authority planners and infrastructure stakeholders in the North West to determine whether engagement is being fostered and establish how this occurs day to day practice.

- *How do key infrastructure provider groups interact with the plan making process in practice?*

- *What are the obstacles to effective engagement from the perspective of the infrastructure provider agency?*

- *What level of commitment do the key infrastructure provider agencies currently show towards involvement in the development of local plans?*

Objective Four:

To synthesise key research findings and draw out implications for planning practice and policy development.

• *What are the practical experiences highlighted in the research?*

• *How can these experiences be used to improve the manner in which infrastructure is planned, coordinated and delivered?*

<u>Research Strategy /Design</u>

The research questions posed in the preceding section raise a number of fundamental methodological considerations, the essence of which must be made explicit, in order to guide the methodological approach chosen for the study.

• This study is evaluating a specific phenomenon, namely the activity of infrastructure planning within the context of a whole host of public sector planning functions at the local level.

• This is a study (in part) of planning professionals operating in the real world. Gaining an insight into their personal views, attitudes and experiences is key to understanding the depth and effectiveness of reflective practice for the individual practitioner, and understanding the extent to which they influence local planning across the country.

• This is also a study of interaction between people operating within organisations from different sectors, and it therefore requires input from identified stakeholder professionals whose own real world agendas have points where they intersect or collide with the public sector planning function prompting a degree of interdependency.

- The study is multi scalar in that it contains both a national dimension, to understand the prevalence of infrastructure planning practice, whilst simultaneously capturing nuanced regional, and local authority specific information.
- The study also needs to gather information about the diversity, and context of appropriate practices, which are prevalent in local planning practice across the country, particularly against a backdrop of economic austerity, and policy churn created by political change.

Yin (2009) offers a useful and simple starting point to consider the appropriate use of qualitative and quantitative approaches and to determine whether a combination of research methods is relevant to the research questions posed. Yin suggests that basic categorisations of research question, such as *who*, *what*, *where*, *how* and *why* questions, can act as a helpful guide in determining the most appropriate research method to be applied (Yin, 2009). Yin also suggests that surveys are the most appropriate methodological approach to examine the incidence, frequency or prevalence of a phenomenon and that these are derived from the "*who*; *what*; *where*; *how many*; *how much*", forms of research question. In contrast "*how* and *why*" questions are more explanatory and likely to lead to the use of qualitative methods, such as case studies (Yin, 2009, p.9). Qualitative methods are particularly relevant where the research wishes to focus on the study of contemporary events, but does not have control over behavioural situations. Taking these considerations into account, it is clear that a mixed methods approach is required to conduct this research.

Mixed methods, or multi-strategy design, facilitates research where there is a demonstrable need to conduct a substantial element of qualitative data collection and combine this with a level of quantitative data in the same research project. However, Robson (2011, p.161) advises that mixed methods research is particularly challenging for the lone researcher as it is time consuming and demands expertise across a wide range of research methods. There is also a risk that mixed methods can lead to a lack of integration of findings from the respective quantitative and qualitative sources in some cases. Mindful of these difficulties, it is important therefore to clarify and make explicit exactly what it is about the mixed methods option which makes this research strategy particularly beneficial within this research project.

The advantages which justify the integration of quantitative and qualitative elements in a mixed method approach have been identified by authors who have considerable experience in the application of this approach, and who have expressed their conviction that the great benefits and added value can be derived from this approach where used appropriately (e.g. Bryman, 2006, p. 105; Robson 2011, p.167). Observations and conclusions drawn from these studies have been summarised in Fig.13 below:-

Fig 13. Advantages of Mixed Methods Approach	
Factor	**Description**
Triangulation	convergence, corroboration, correspondence of results from different methods.
Completeness	provides a more comprehensive picture of the topic
Off setting weaknesses Stronger inferences	neutralises limitations of one form of research
Answers different research questions	Covers a wider scope
More appropriate to complex phenomena and situations	Particular value in real world situations, deals more effectively with the range of perspectives
Explains findings	Facilitates sampling to provide further explanation
Illustrates data	Substantiates initial findings and initial impressions
Refining research questions	Qualitative preliminary investigation aids the early stages of the research development
Testing	Initial qualitative stage facilitates testing or pilot stages
Interdisciplinary	Useful applications where research subjects originate from different disciplines or fields of activity

(Source: Author)

Outline of Research Approach

The table in Fig 14. provides a comprehensive overview of the mixed methods research strategy applied within this study. Breaking the research down into three sequential stages helped in managing the scale and scope of the study. Despite the note of caution contained about the potential risks of disjointedness which has been observed by previous exponents (Bryman, 2006; Robson, 2011), a particular strength of the selected research design lies in the inter relationships and dependencies between the three specific stages. Compared against the advantages identified by Bryman and Robson, each of the three stages identified in the summary above has a directional purpose, which builds a sequential and logical narrative for the study as a whole. In addition, the three stages ensure that a more comprehensive multi dimensional overview is achieved and facilitates effective triangulation of the research findings overall.

CONCEPTUAL LINK	STAGE OF METHODOLOGY	RESEARCH METHOD	PARTICIPANTS	SCOPE	PURPOSE
	Stage 1 Preliminary Interviews	Semi Structured Interviews	Academic / Practitioner Experts x 6	National	Preliminary Investigation
Identification Network of the Network Identification of Agenda Understanding attitudes / approaches to engagement	Stage 2 National Survey of Local Authority Planners	Qualitative Survey - survey design - pilot exercise - survey promotion - monitoring of responses - survey analysis	Local Authority Planners x 197 Survey Monkey Academic experts x 3 Practitioner experts x 1 Local Authority Planners x 11 Chief Officers letter x 400 RTPI Regional Coordinators x 11 TCPA POS Academics RTPI Regional Coordinators Author	National	Understand infrastructure planning as practiced by local authority planners Determine extent of infrastructure planning practice in England
Identification of the Network Identification of Agenda Understanding attitudes / approaches to engagement	Stage 3 Case Studies of Infrastructure Provider Agencies	Semi Structured Interviews Group Discussions	The Environment Agency United Utilities plc The Highways Agency EA, UU, HA x 3 Planning Liaison Teams	North West Region	Assess level of commitment to working with LDF process Identification of obstacles to engagement Understand current operational practice

Fig.14 (Source: Author)

Stage 1. Preliminary, Investigative, Scoping Stage

This stage sought to pull together a clearer understanding of the academic, legal and policy context within which planning reform in England had taken place, through a comprehensive review of the national and international literature on spatial planning, infrastructure planning, and the role of practitioners. The literature review was undertaken in combination with a series of preliminary scoping interviews and ongoing discussions with 7 expert academics, practitioners and policy makers from across England (Fig 15). It should be noted here that comments from some of the interviewees listed in Fig 15 are also used in chapter 4 in relation to the development of the conceptual framework (although this does not apply to all the individuals listed below).

Fig 15. List of Elite Interviews & Discussions		
Organisation	Interviewee Title	Date
Professional Planning Body	President (retired)	2nd August, 2011, (plus ongoing discussion June-Aug)
Training Organisation	Principal Consultant	17th June, 2011, (plus ongoing discussions May - Dec)
Metropolitan BC Yorkshire	Head of Economy and Environment Directorate & Principal Planner Development Strategy Team	1st August, 2011, (plus ongoing discussion July- September)
Borough Council Merseyside	Corporate Planning, Engagement & Communication Team Members	15th September, 2011
School of Planning, South	Professor of Planning	2011 - 2012 ongoing discussions
School of Planning North West Region (1)	Professor of Planning	28th June & 3rd August
School of Planning North West Region (2)	Professor of Planning	6th June, 2011

The literature review helped to identify the experts who needed to be contacted and consulted; similarly, the expert interviews acted as an important opportunity to explore impressions gained from the literature review in more depth, with those who had direct practical experience of planning reform and implementation. The literature on elite interviewing methods demonstrates that this form of investigation is important when the researcher wants to know, "What a set of people think, or how they interpret an event or series of events, or what they have done or are planning to do" (Aberdach & Rockman, 2002, p.673)

Consistent with the guiding sentiment related to reflective practice, the expert interviews provided unique personal insights into recent experiences in practice, and importantly revealed vast differences in the understandings, impressions, and opinions of the expert group themselves, which was not particularly apparent from the published literature. The contextual documentary evidence in combination with the qualitative investigative exercise, provided a firm foundation on which to develop the aims and objectives and the conceptual framework for the study, and provided assurance that the research strategy was sufficiently rigorous to produce data which contributed to research knowledge.

Stage 2. National Survey of Local Authority Planners

This stage involved a quantitative national survey of local authority planners and was specifically targeted at those practicing planners with direct experience and involvement in infrastructure planning. The purpose in conducting the survey was to seek out and consult as many local authority planners involved in infrastructure planning as possible; to gather new information to better understand the network of actors with whom they liaise about infrastructure; and to gather information about the planners' infrastructure planning agenda, experiences and attitudes.

Using digital research methods including an electronic survey software package, Survey Monkey, and other digital approaches such as Twitter was an important and useful way to contact potential respondents, and collect detailed data, quickly and efficiently, from such a potentially extensive national planner community. Again, in conformity with the important research principle that this study is focused on capturing the personal reflections of individual planners about their experiences of infrastructure planning, the survey targeted *the people*, in preference to the local authorities they represented. There were other important reasons why this was the preferred research strategy; formal consultation with each local authority might have slowed data collection, led to gaps in the evidence where authorities hesitated or failed to respond, and resulted in a more 'official' and less reflective response.

It is considered best practice in conducting social surveys to have an established sample size which is clearly representative of the general population in which the researcher is interested (Williams & May, 1996, p.8). Identifying a representative sample was not feasible in this study because the total population of practicing planners who have involvement in infrastructure planning is not known. Such information is not collected by the Planning Inspectorate or any of the professional bodies and no other research data has yet been collated on this issue. The absence of any indication about the total population of those practicing infrastructure planning, meant that even greater emphasis was placed on the importance of promoting the survey as extensively as possible.

The qualitative interviewing conducted in stage 1 was essential for designing the questionnaire and formulating the survey questions. In addition, some of the experts who participated in the initial scoping exercise in stage 1 had input in suggesting relevant survey questions and helped to comment and guide the development of a draft questionnaire.

A comprehensive pilot exercise was conducted in August 2011, in preparation for the national survey going on line between September - December 2011. Experts involved in the preliminary interviews also assisted in the pilot exercise by recommending 7 planning practitioners who were known to have considerable experience of infrastructure planning to test both the content and the technical aspects of the online questionnaire. The pilot questionnaire was tested in 7 local authority planning teams. (Fig 16) provides a list of all the participants:-

Fig 16. Participants in Survey Test Exercise August 2011	
Local Authority	Practitioner Title
Lewisham Council	Planning Policy Officers x 2
Bath & NE Somerset Council	Planning Policy Officer
Elmbridge Borough Council	Principal Planning Officer
Surrey County Council	Principal Infrastructure & Agreement Officer
Harlow Council	Forward Planning Officer
Waverley Council	Principal Planning Officer
Calderdale Council	Principal Planning Officer & Planning Policy Officer

(Source: Author)

Communications were sent by email to all the prospective participants in the pilot exercise. All of the practitioners identified took up the invitation and demonstrated great interest and enthusiasm in participating and providing their comments. A detailed explanatory note outlining the purpose of the national survey was also sent out after each participant had agreed to take part (see Appendix 1)

All the participants provided very positive, constructive and encouraging

feedback, the following quotations reflect the overall tone of the responses:-

" As part of the planning policy team, I have led on a number
of elements of our infrastructure planning.... my general
thoughts are that you are asking the right type of questions. I
think the key topics are as follows, which mostly you seem to
have covered: Where people are producing an IDP; How this
links with the LDF; How this links to localism; Links to
delivery processes and groups; the corporate approach. I
think the terminology is fine, we have been looking at
infrastructure here for a few years, and are hence used to the
terminology. Other authorities might not be, so you might
want to consider a short glossary?"
(Planning Policy Officer, Lewisham, 4th August 2011)

"This is a very interesting and urgently needed piece of work,
so good luck and please keep me informed of the
outcomes..... Your questionnaire is good and touches on
most of the relevant issues. " (Forward Planning Officer,
Harlow, 18th August 2011)

A copy of the letter inviting planners to take part in the main survey is attached (Appendix 2) as is the finalised questionnaire which was used in the study (Appendix 3). A wide range of promotional initiatives were undertaken from the period prior to the launch of the survey and on an ongoing basis throughout the data collection period. Electronically, the survey was promoted on Twitter, and through the Communities of Practice Website. Advisory letters were also posted to the Chief Planning Officers of all local authorities in England requesting their personal participation and asking them to encourage all planning staff with relevant knowledge to participate. A copy of the letter to all Chief Planning Officers inviting them to participate in the survey and requesting the circulation of the questionnaire to other planning staff in their local authority is attached (Appendix 4). All major planning bodies were contacted and their full cooperation with the survey was secured prior to the commencement of the exercise. The TCPA, POS and the RTPI all placed promotional advertising about the survey in their monthly online updates. In addition, all 11 RTPI Regional Coordinators were extremely proactive and enthusiastic in encouraging planner responses across all regions. Effective and real time monitoring of response rates during the survey proved an essential mechanism through which to maximise the response from that all regions. Upon completion of each questionnaire, all respondees were offered a complementary report, summarising the key survey findings from across the country, as an added incentive to encourage planners to participate.

The use of Survey Monkey as the online survey software facilitated speed and responsiveness at all stages of the exercise, including survey promotion, design, testing, monitoring of responses, and data analysis. Incoming data on response rates was monitored in real time for the duration of the survey. The ability to observe the response rate with such immediacy meant that additional promotional work could be targeted far more effectively. This feature of the research strategy clearly had an extremely beneficial effect in producing the highly successful response rate. Individual responses are identifiable through the electronic software via the tracking of individual IP addresses. The ability to interrogate incoming data, ensures that the survey findings and analysis are protected against duplication and double counting. However, data was also collected in a manner which ensured the confidentiality of all participants. The identity of all individual participants has been strictly protected throughout the project in the way their responses have been stored, analysed and presented.

Exponents of survey based research frequently hold very rigid views about the exclusivity of survey research as a quantitative analytical research technique. It has been argued that, " The purpose of the survey is to produce statistics, that is quantitative or numerical descriptions about some aspects of the study population" (Fowler, 2002, p.1). Others who have considerable expertise in using survey methods have extended and broadened the use of survey methods, for more qualitative purposes, where outputs extend beyond the numeric arguing that, " A survey is a system for collecting information from or about people to describe, compare or explain their knowledge, attitudes and behaviour" (Fink, 2003, p.61) More recent research has experimented with the analysis of qualitative research using quantitative techniques. (Jansen, 2010).

All of these examples are cited to show that quantitative and qualitative techniques can be appropriately and usefully integrated within the same survey exercise to enhance the quality of the research data collected and the analysis.

In this survey exercise, there was a clear need to gather both quantitative and qualitative data and to analyse and present that data in both a numeric and textual format. Chapter 6 presents the data using statistics and graphs to summarise contextual information to capture the extent and prevalence of infrastructure planning practiced across the country. There has also been a heavy reliance on textual analysis of survey responses to understand and interpret individual written comments of a more reflective nature which participants have been invited and encouraged to provide in respect of many of the survey questions.

The information gathered from the planners who took part in the survey subsequently provided the evidence and formed the foundation upon which the third (stakeholder focussed) stage of the study was based, thus demonstrating the strong interdependency between the second and third stages of the research strategy.

Stage 3. Case Studies of Infrastructure Providers

This component of the research strategy shifted the spatial focus of the study from national to regional. A detailed quantitative, web based documentary review was undertaken to corroborate survey findings about the status of local authority plan making (contained in Chapter 6) and to supplement this picture by providing an up to date snapshot of local authority consultation on the local plan and site allocations. The website review involved investigating each local authority planning website in the north west.

The decision to incorporate a regional dimension into the research strategy was taken for a number of reasons. Firstly it was useful to examine a northern region where attracting infrastructure investment is generally considered to be more challenging than in the south of the country. Narrowing this part of the study to the north west region also facilitated more direct contact with individual practitioners in the external stakeholder agencies. It was essential that the study incorporated more in depth conversations with other actors in the infrastructure planning network to complement the broad geographical scope achieved through the national survey in the previous research stage. Only through effective discussion is it possible to probe practitioner experiences with sufficient depth to address elements of the conceptual framework related to the infrastructure planning agenda and the forms of engagement which have been taking place. Stage 3 therefore demanded more extensive shift towards the use of qualitative research methods, with a heavy reliance on the use of face-to-face interviews and focus group discussions.

The importance which has been consistently placed on securing a logical and sequential flow to the research strategy is further demonstrated both between stages 2 & 3, and within stage 3. The rationale for conducting a regional phase of the study arose as a consequence of the survey finding that planning practitioners themselves indicated that the implementation of local plans is most critically dependent on the effective provision of water and transport infrastructure (see Chapter 6). This discovery in stage 2 necessitated research contact with the Environment Agency, United Utilities and the Highways Agency in the north west. Initial contact was made with two senior managers for United Utilities and the Highways Agency via the RTPI conference network. In an approach which mirrored the preliminary interview strategy in stage 1 of the study, introductory interviews were conducted with these senior managers, to explain the purpose of the research, to identify issues of common interest and value and to request their ongoing cooperation in securing interviews with a wider group of staff in each agency.

As a result of a series of 6 interviews and other telephone and email discussions with senior managers in all three agencies, group discussions were arranged with all the respective teams who have direct day to day interaction with all local authority planners in the north west. The interviews also helped to formulate the issues to be addressed in the focus groups in each of the three agencies. A summary of interview questions which were posed in the initial meetings with all the infrastructure stakeholder agencies is attached (Appendix 5). The interviews and group discussions which took place over the ensuing month with each of the 3 agencies who participated in the study commenced with an initial update to the participants about the progress made with the

research. The staff in each agency were interested in the feedback from the planner survey and asked very specific questions about the responses which were being provided by the planners from the north west. The findings outlined in chapter 7 therefore provide a unique insight into infrastructure planning at the local level in the region, and help to establish the level of interest and involvement which exists within the three organisations towards infrastructure planning within the local planning system.

The rich literature on the use of focus groups provides important guidance on the preparation, implementation, and analysis of this specialist research method. Focus groups are variously described as organised discussions (Gibbs, 1997), a collective activity within a group based on topics supplied by a researcher (Morgan, 1996). The literature demonstrates the value and applicability of the use of focus groups across the social sciences (Barbour & Kitzinger, 1999). Focus Groups have the capacity to produce quite unique forms of research material through interaction and dialogue, generated variously between participants, moderators, funders and researchers. Although Focus Groups have great value as a stand alone research activity, they also have the capability to probe, complement and corroborate other qualitative and quantitative approaches, and therefore work well in this study as part of the triangulation process.

Direct, day to day experience of working with local authority planning teams across the north west on infrastructure planning as part of local plans was the common strand which linked all of the three groups and made the use of focus group research methods a relevant approach in this study. The senior

managers in each agency were responsible for arranging dates and times for

the group discussions. To ensure that all the relevant team members were

present, the group discussions were added onto the agenda for regular team

meeting. Such an approach ensured that all three sessions could be arranged

quickly and within a short period of time.

Fig 17. provides a summary of the dates of all north west infrastructure provider group interviews, meetings, presentations and group discussions:-

Fig 17. List of Stakeholder Discussions & Meetings			
Stakeholder Agency	**Contact**	**Date**	**Duration**
United Utilities, Warrington	Senior Manager preliminary meeting	Nov 2010	30 mins
"	Group Meeting, Managers and Planning and LDF Team	15th March 2012	3 hours
"	Group Meeting, Managers, Asset Development Team, Planning & LDF Team	10th May 2012	3 hours
"	Planning Team Discussion	10th May 2012	1 hour
"	Senior Manager interview	6th Sept 2012	2 hours
Environment Agency, Penrith	Senior Manager interview	7th June 2012	2 hours
"	Group Meeting, Managers and Planning Liaison Team for Lancashire & Cumbria	10th July, 2012	2 hours
Highways Agency, Central Manchester	Senior Manager preliminary meeting	Nov 2010	30 mins
"	Senior Manager interview	11th June, 2012	2 hours
"	Group Meeting, 2 Senior Managers and full planning liaison team NW region	10th July, 2012	2 hours

(Source: Author)

The literature on focus group methods also advises that a short presentation to introduce the issues to be considered and debated is given at the beginning of each session. (Stewart & Shamdasani, 1990). In this study, short introductory presentations were also supplemented with a summary of the text comments made by planners as part of the national survey. Taking this approach to introducing the context and some of the findings from the survey also proved a useful way to achieve some consistency in the way the three groups began their discussions. Moreover, it stimulated the important process of personal reflection which was being sought at this part of the exercise.

Coding of Research Data

The methodological approach outlined in this chapter is based upon the use of semi-structured interviews, survey data including detailed textual answers and group discussions. This section explains the ways in which all the research material was collected and coded.

The semi-structured interviews which took place in stage 1 of the methodology have been noted manually, during each interview, and further detailed notes written up immediately following each session. All the interviews and group discussions which took place in stage 3 of the research have been audio recorded with the full permission and cooperation of all participants. All the audio recordings have subsequently been transcribed, in their unabridged form, by the author to provide a full documentary record of the many hours of proceedings. Transcription is a laborious, time consuming process due to the volume of material obtained but this approach was considered important to ensure absolute accuracy and data reliability in preparation for the writing up

stages of the thesis; writing up is itself an ongoing process extending months or years after the data has been collected. Full transcriptions allowed the 'sense' and nuances of conversations particularly in group discussions to emerge and proved a useful and important point of reference over the entire time frame for producing the thesis. Careful attention to transcription therefore helps to improve both the speed and quality of data analysis. (Krueger 1995; Puchta & Potter 2002). Data collected via the national survey provided a body of written responses from participants. All the survey responses are retained by the author in the exact form supplied by each participant.

Coding has been undertaken thematically throughout the research process. The identification of themes is a complex task. Initial ideas about key themes emerged from the literature and policy reviews (Chapter 2 & 3). The validity of these early impressions was subsequently tested through the interview questioning in stage 1 of the study. As the themes were clarified, consolidated and adapted through consultation with key experts; this helped to develop the aims objectives and key research questions presented earlier in this chapter.

Although forms of numerical coding are a well recognised technique for text analysis (Aberbach & Rockman 2002), texts were not evaluated quantitatively as part of this study as it was felt that this would detract from the quality of the analysis. For interviews, group discussions and in the analysis of text responses in the survey importance has been placed on the coding of qualitative statements to reflect predominant views from participants, recurring comments, frequently mentioned issues and understanding the level of emphasis placed on certain issues by participants. The two empirical chapters also provides an

indication where selected quotes reflect typical, atypical remarks and where quotations demonstrate the existence of a subset of opinion (Chapter 6 & 7)

All the coding of research data for this study has been undertaken manually in preference to using any of the available software packages. Manual coding facilitated the detection of key themes and allowed the author to cross reference comments by different individuals and agencies effectively. The total number of interviews undertaken and survey responses received via all 3 stages of the research strategy meant that manual coding was a manageable exercise for an individual researcher.

The Durability of the Research Method

In reflecting on the experience of designing and implementing the research strategy outlined in this chapter, it has been clearly demonstrated that the two main risk factors in using mixed methods research identified by Bryman (2006) and Robson (2011) have not only been carefully addressed, but have been translated into the key strengths of this study. A complex and wide ranging investigation of considerable breadth and scale was essential if the research questions posed were to be fully examined. As Bryman (2006) and Robson (2011) both point out, projects based on mixed methods require the researcher to demonstrate skills across multiple research techniques. This study has demanded technical knowledge of digital research methods, creativity, persistence, and considerable interpersonal skill to seek out and gain the confidence of individuals, and organisations. The impressive response rate from the national survey, and the comprehensive and very frank and forthright evidence provided by planners and employees from the Environment Agency,

Highways Agency and United Utilities and other elite practitioners, are all testimony to the quality and appropriateness of the research strategy, and the incisive quality of the findings.

Sharing of information, and an emphasis on examining reflective professional practice, are the two fundamental principals which has made this research strategy work so effectively. Drawing on other multi method research, this study has been based on sharing findings from the national planner survey with the three stakeholder agencies to act as an important stimulus for their own process of reflection, and to provide a more complete picture of infrastructure planning practice (Mc Kendrick, 1999, p. 45). Multi method research, as applied in this study has therefore provided further evidence to support the existence of both tactical and compensatory strengths of this approach (Mc Kendrick, 1999, p. 49). Similarly, the research design process in this study has drawn upon previous academic experience to justify and apply the integration of quantitative and qualitative techniques in the combination which it was felt would best satisfy the needs of this particular project (Philip, 1998, p. 273)

Reflecting on the experience of using the selected research strategy in practice is critically important to demonstrate that the whole exercise could be repeated again at some future date as a way to measure infrastructure planning practices as they develop. This study has managed to achieve the widespread cooperation and active participation of local planners from across the country. It has also succeeded in securing the cooperation of key stakeholder agencies on a cross sectoral basis.

Concluding Remarks

The chapter has explained the research aim, objectives and methodology for the study. The methodological design choices which have been made have been explained and justified in the context of the wider literature on research methods; the thorough testing and piloting of the approach has been summarised; and details have been provided of the way in which the research strategy was intended to work in practice. The next two chapters explore the findings which the operationalisation of this research strategy has produced.

CHAPTER 6

EXPLORING INFRASTRUCTURE PLANNING IN PRACTICE: LOCAL PLANNERS

Introduction

The aim in this chapter is to establish whether and to what extent local planners in England conduct infrastructure planning within their daily practice. The evaluation takes place against the complex legislative and policy backdrop of English planning which has been described in earlier chapters of the study. Local planners were told they had a very central role in infrastructure planning within local government reforms initiated by New Labour (HM Govt, 2004 & 2008; DCLG, 2008c). Local Planning Authorities were provided with very precise guidance and structured training through the Steps Approach which was driven very strongly in the 2000s and tied into the spatial planning approach (Morphet, 2009 a&b). Since 2010, the Coalition government has similarly placed great emphasis upon the importance of infrastructure planning for economic growth and recovery but presents local planners as the bete noire of the entire project; under the Coalition planners are seen as the major obstacle to be overcome in developing infrastructure and promoting economic recovery (DCLG, 2011a). Furthermore, since 2010 the terminology of 'spatial' planning has become politically unfashionable, whilst the new policy directives such as the 'duty to cooperate' and the 'presumption in favour of sustainable development' (DCLG, 2011a) suggest that an integrated form of planning practice continues to be an imperative to be cultivated and promoted by planning professionals.

Researchers have not yet begun to explore how local planners operate in this complex and conflicted planning environment. Conceptually and methodologically this study has, therefore, placed great emphasis on the importance of direct consultation with practitioners as a way to develop a more accurate and comprehensive national overview of the way planners currently approach infrastructure planning. In order to consult as many local planners as possible, the research which informs this first empirical chapter has been gathered via a national online survey of planners who are directly involved in infrastructure planning in practice through the LDF process. The survey data was collected between September and December 2011. The survey has been undertaken to address the issues raised in Objective 2 of this study which is to,

> "Assess the involvement of local authority planners in infrastructure planning across England" (Chapter 5)

Objective 2 has been further qualified and explained through a number of research questions,

- Is infrastructure planning widely practiced by local authority planners in England?

- Who are local authority planners interacting with to deliver the infrastructure necessary to support local plans and how extensive is the network?

- What are the priority infrastructure needs in the delivery of local plans?

- What is the attitude amongst planners towards engagement with infrastructure stakeholder agencies?

- What have been the obstacles and inhibitors to the development of infrastructure planning?

The next three parts of this chapter provide the evidence collected from the survey to address the three key themes explained in the conceptual framework:

- **Network:** Explores the organisational context for infrastructure planning within the local planning system

- **Agenda:** Explores the policy context for infrastructure planning between organisations at the local level

- **Engagement:** Explores the attitudes towards consultation and dialogue which exist between local planners and stakeholders with reference to infrastructure planning

The final part of this chapter explains what planners had to say more generally about their experiences of professional practice over recent years and how the policy shifts and experimentation has impacted on their ability to develop infrastructure planning in practice.

Local Authority Planner Involvement in Infrastructure Planning

The survey attracted the participation of a total of 197 local authority planners who are personally and directly involved in infrastructure planning. The responses were received from every region in England; all local authority types; all levels of experience within the planning profession; and a diversity of local areas across the country. The scale and breadth of the response the survey has attracted shows that infrastructure planning is widely practiced by planners across the country.

Pan Regional Involvement

Fig18. shows that planners from every region are actively involved in infrastructure planning. Planner activity on infrastructure planning appears to cut across the national north - south divide. Local authorities in particular southern regions such as the South East and South West responded in relatively larger numbers, but so too did planners from the North West and Yorkshire & Humber. Overall, the North East showed slightly less interest in answering questions about infrastructure planning as shown in the graph below.

Fig.18 Regional Distribution of Survey Responses
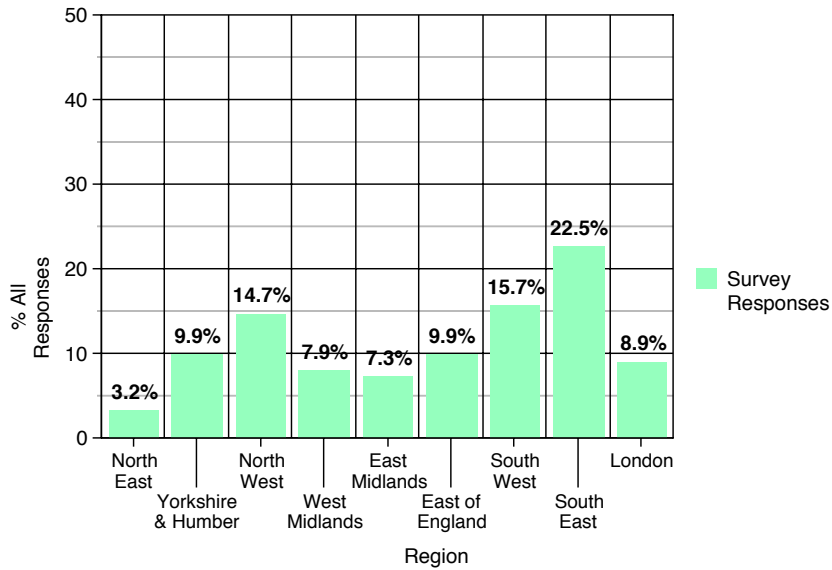
National Online Survey 2011

Local Authority Types

The survey shows that the planners who responded are working on infrastructure planning in all authority types in England, (as shown in Fig 19. below). 84 (43.5%) of planners who participated in the survey work in District Councils; 26 (13.5%) of the respondents work in Metropolitan Authorities and 17 (8.8%) stated they worked in London Boroughs. It is, however, important to note that the survey is intended to reflect the views of individual infrastructure practitioners, and their responses do not necessarily reflect the official opinion of the local authority with whom they are currently employed. It is also important to state that, although a total of nearly 200 planners took part in the survey, it would not be accurate to say that their views reflect the circumstances in 200 councils as some respondents may have worked within the same local authority.

Fig.19 Responses by Authority Type
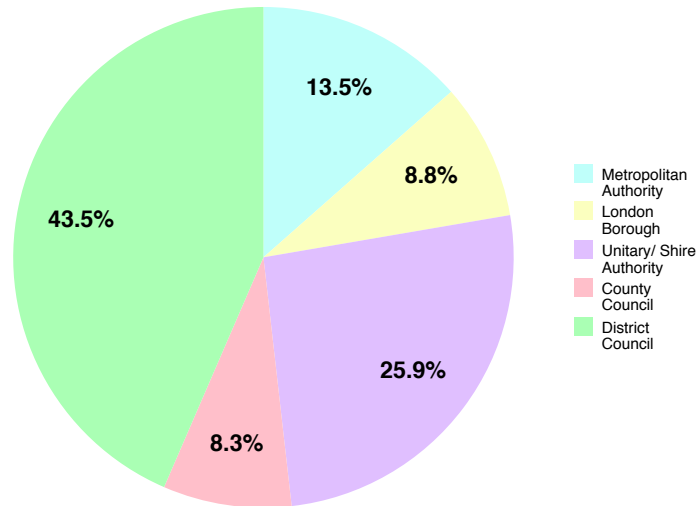
National Online Survey 2011

Participant Profile

Fig 20. below, shows that practicing planners of all grades and levels of experience currently work on infrastructure planning. The survey attracted the views of a significant number of the highest grades, including 10 Chief

Officers (the remainder were junior specialists and consultants working for and their senior officer colleagues, nating the strategic programs in ey can therefore accurately reflect strategic issues, as well as the more day to day planning work.

Fig.20 Participant Profile
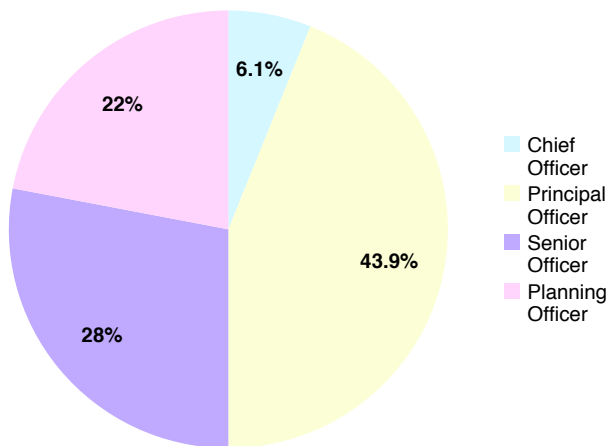
National Online Survey 2011

The survey indicates that infrastructure planning involves a wide range of tasks. The remarks planners have made in their own written comments within the survey give a good insight into the nature and range of the infrastructure related work being undertaken, from data collection to more challenging strategy development.

The survey indicates the range and types of infrastructure work planners are now doing across the country (The names or other identifying information has been excluded in order to preserve the anonymity of the survey participants). Planners say they are focussed on various aspects of their CIL strategy, such as preparing evidence for a CIL EIP (London Planner); collating infrastructure information to prepare the CIL charging schedule (NW Planner); or investment planning as part of CIL(London Planner). Other planners are currently involved in writing specific infrastructure policy documents such as the transport policy document for the CS (Yorkshire & Humber Planner), or a green infrastructure strategy document (SW Planner). Some planners are more involved in the co ordination of infrastructure data across a number of local authority areas to support joint core strategies (E. Midlands Planner). The task of liaising with infrastructure provider agencies to understand requirements, not just through more formal groups but, significantly, through one to one dialogue, was also raised as an important current undertaking (E. Midlands Planner)

Fig.21 Planning Team Profile

National Online Survey 2011
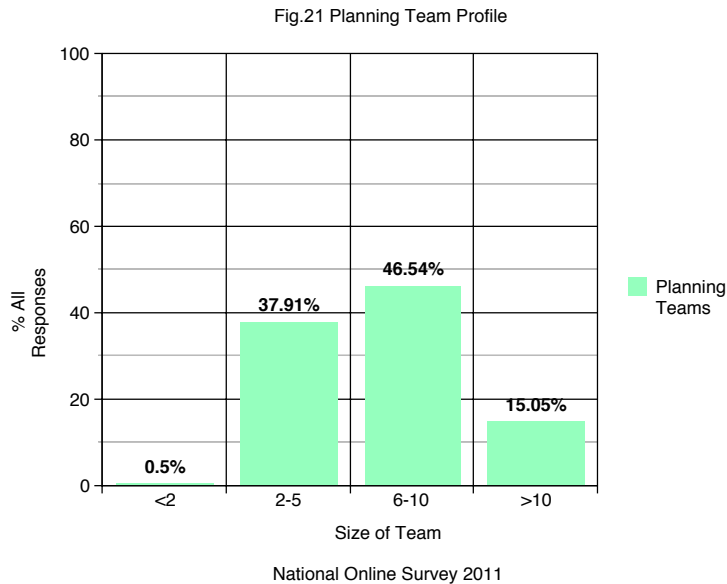
Fig 21. shows the size of local authority planning teams as described by the survey respondents, which typically consist of anywhere between 2 -10 people. Some planning teams have commented in associated interviews and in telephone conversations that they have jointly submitted one single questionnaire as part of the 197 responses received, in a group or team effort to represent their respective local authority. They also commented that they found the task of completing this questionnaire as a useful exercise through which to explore and review their own operational team based experiences of infrastructure planning (e.g. Calderdale Council, 1/8/2011, 18/8/2011; Wirral Council, 15/9/2011). Many of the tasks surrounding infrastructure planning are time consuming, from composing a comprehensive infrastructure planning schedule to negotiating with others about matters of strategy and monitoring on an ongoing basis. Working effectively on all these tasks is therefore likely to be quite a challenge to the high proportion of planners who operate in the relatively smaller teams which consist of between 2 and 5 people; 70 of the planners stated that they worked in a team of that size. The challenges presented by working in

small teams have been identified in previous research interviews about

infrastructure planning conducted by the author with teams in the north

west such as Ribble Valley Borough Council and Rossendale Council

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National Online Survey 2011

Fig.22 Area Characteristics

National Online Survey 2011

National Progress in Formulating Development Plans

Planners were asked through the survey, to provide up to date details about the level of progress with plan making in their local authority. The responses provide a context within which to situate the information in the following sections of this chapter about the planner's network, agenda and engagement for infrastructure planning.

Collecting information through the survey participants about the current status of local plan development is critical because it is only through the act of producing a local plan, and the accompanying infrastructure delivery plan documents, that local planners are able to understand the scale of stakeholder engagement required in their area and begin to establish a more informed dialogue with a more targeted group of infrastructure provider agencies about the key issues which are emerging. The status of DPDs is therefore an important indicator about the stage infrastructure planning has reached in local planning practice and is a necessary platform from which the ability to deliver infrastructure can be properly investigated.

Local Plan (Core Strategy) DPDs

Fig 23. Summarises information about the status of the Core Strategy DPD provided by the survey participants. The survey data shows that around half of the 183 planners who responded to the survey are now working with an adopted CS, with the remainder declaring that they are actively involved in plan preparation (see Chapter 3 for further details about progress with core strategy documents in 2012)

Fig.23 Status of the Development Plan Core Strategy

Chart: % of all Responses vs Stage of Preparation

- Adopted: 32.8%
- Adopted & under review: 6.52%
- Sound pending adoption: 2.71%
- Submitted/ awaiting examination: 12.04%
- In preparation: 43.23%
- Preparation halted: 2.71%

Legend: Stage of Preparation
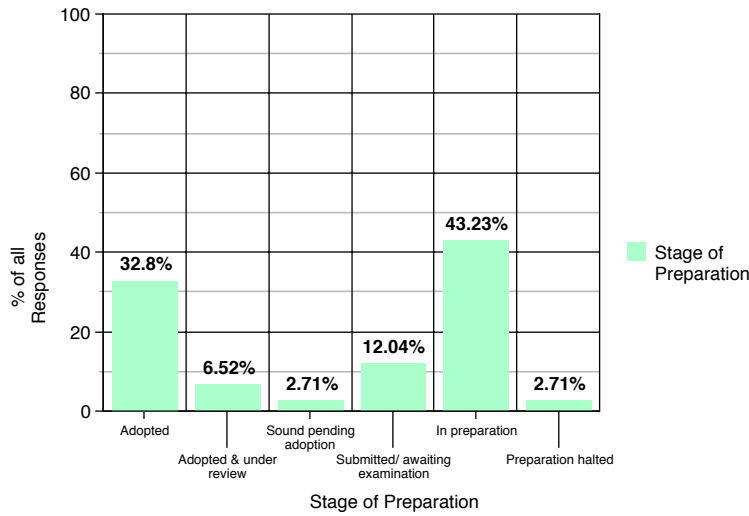
National Online Survey 2011

The survey data confirms the information from other recent exercises to review progress with Core Strategy DPDs in which local planners have received heavy criticism for failure of LPAs to produce core strategies more quickly. The following is an extract from a blog on the Planning Advisory Website,

Chart: Number of Infrastructure Schemes vs Year (2008–2011)
Values: 16, 51, 114, 164
Legend: Infrastructure Schemes Progress
National Online Survey 2011

"What does it say about a council if they haven't bothered to produce a core strategy? Last week I reviewed the local development schemes of about sixty local planning authority websites. I needed to know when they were planning to publish their core strategies. I was genuinely shocked to find that many of them seemed to have stopped developing spatial plans altogether. The requirement to produce a core strategy has been in place since 2004. Core strategies were supposed to be plans that could be written in about two years. Six years later, the planning community isn't that shocked to find that only half of England has a plan... how can so many authorities be so far behind?" (PAS, 2011)

The continued emphasis on the importance of developing a local plan by the Coalition Government, as shown in the CLG Select Committee report on the draft NPPF, and highlighted in more recent legal texts on the subject, is likely to galvanise local authorities to speed up their progress in the coming months,

> "...the Framework should unambiguously reflect the statutory supremacy of local plans and that the presumption in favour of sustainable development should be qualified by the need for consistency with the local plan". (Ricketts & Field, 2012, pp 223-224)

(also see chapter 3 for further discussion on progress with core strategies and Coalition planning policy)

Infrastructure Delivery Plans & Schedules

Evidence collected in the survey does, however, confirm that planners have intensified their efforts to develop an infrastructure planning strategy to accompany the core strategy / local plan. Analysis of the survey data suggests that the work to prepare infrastructure delivery plans and schedules to support Core Strategy DPDs has escalated over the past 4 years. 163 planners stated that they were now working on an IDP. Some caution needs to be exercised in interpreting these findings, however, as the survey did not ask the respondents directly how many years they had been working on infrastructure planning; however, given that 78% of the planners who took part in the survey are of senior planning officer grade or above, it is clear that the respondents would have the required level of insight and experience to answer the question. The findings concerning IDP schedule commencement are shown in Fig 24 below.

IDP Commencement	Response
< 6 months	17
6-12 months	32
1-2 years	63
2-3 years	35
> 3 years	16
	Total 163 (34 did not answer this question)

The increase in the amount of infrastructure planning activity identified in the survey is likely to be the result of a combination of factors. The revised version of PPS 12 in 2008 (CLG, 2008a) firmly restated the importance of the infrastructure delivery plan as part of the local plan process; as a result many local authorities began a process of retrofitting IDPs into their local plan documentation (Morphet, 2009, p.407).

Survey responses also suggest a growing recognition amongst local authority planners about the critical importance of infrastructure planning as an essential component in the development their Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) strategy,

> " The driver for authorities to seek a fully populated infrastructure schedule has been the need to underpin the future CIL charging schedule" (SE.Q. 16/29).

The fact that 163 of the planners who took part in the survey declared that they have been actively involved in developing and producing IDPs and Schedules is highly significant for a number of reasons. Firstly the survey

data is confirmation that planners are increasing their efforts with plan making, in general, and with infrastructure planning, in particular. It is not easily to detect this trend other than through direct consultation with the planners doing the work.

The Planning Inspectorate monitors plan progress primarily through numbers of submitted documents but the quantification of submitted documents does not give sufficient insight into the quality of the content. The survey findings are evidence that significant numbers of planners now have a much more informed working knowledge and insight into the infrastructure requirements to support the plan making process in their respective areas, and are therefore ideally placed to provide information about infrastructure requirements, existing resources, the show stopper issues, and to identify the key provider agencies which influence the prospects for local plan implementation. Attention can now be turned in this chapter to addressing the key conceptual issues related to network, agenda and engagement.

<u>Network: Organisational Integration</u>

The organisational network for infrastructure planning is the first
component of the conceptual framework (see the conceptual framework
diagram in Chapter 4). The conceptual framework diagram shows the
organisations and agencies with whom local authority planners are most
likely to engage if they are adopting an integrated planning approach to
infrastructure provision and forecasting. This section explains what the
planners who participated in the survey had to say about their links across
this conceptual network; addressing engagement details for each of the
organisations in turn: i.e. the corporate team; other local authority
departments; their planning colleagues in Development Management;
neighbouring local authorities; and finally a host of other key stakeholders
who operate externally to the local authority.

Before presenting the survey findings about planner engagement with the
list of actors in the network it is important to provide a reminder of some of
the points raised in the earlier part of the study as these issues form the
general context which makes consultation with planners in the survey
important. The contextual issues covered here are as follows; the
continuing importance placed on stakeholder engagement for
infrastructure planning as expressed in the new Coalition government
planning policy; the diverse opinions expressed by the experts consulted
in the preliminary research about the role of planners in the local authority
on infrastructure planning; the concerns which have been expressed in the
academic literature about the willingness of local planners to engage with

stakeholders and the questions raised about the quality of stakeholder

involvement. All these issues are discussed in this section.

The need for planners to liaise and cooperate on all infrastructure issues,

including strategic and investment concerns within a network which

includes the wider local authority and a vast range of other agencies if they

are to plan for infrastructure effectively, has been clearly and consistently

set out in the legislative framework for a number of years: this has been

the case under both New Labour and the Coalition government, PPS 12

stated,

> "The core strategy should be supported by evidence
> of what physical, social and green infrastructure is
> needed to enable the amount of development
> proposed for the area, taking account of its type and
> distribution. This evidence should cover who will
> provide the infrastructure and when it will be
> provided. The core strategy should draw on and in
> parallel influence any strategies and investment
> plans of the local authority and other
> organisations." (CLG, 2008a)

More recent legislation, which encapsulates Coalition planning policy

continues to reinforce the principle that planners should work in

combination with the wider local authority, community and infrastructure

providers.

The Coalition also gives more specific guidance about the range of the suggested infrastructure provider agencies,

> "Local Planning Authorities should work with other Local Authorities and Providers to assess the quality and capacity for infrastructure for transport, water supply, waste water & treatment, energy (including heating) telecommunications, utilities, waste, health & social care, education, flood risk, coastal change management, and its ability to meet and forecast demands, and take account of the need for strategic infrastructure, including nationally significant infrastructure within their areas" (NPPF, para 162)

A key objective of this study is to try to establish the extent to which planners have embraced the enduring principles expressed in the legislation. It is important to understand whether planners have begun to work on infrastructure planning collaboratively within a broad inter sectoral network which includes all stakeholder groups, and using the definitions adopted in previous research (see Baker et al, 2010).

Preliminary interviews with experts, which are more fully described in Chapter 4, suggested fundamental differences in opinion about the degree to which planners participate with other colleagues and agencies in the development of local infrastructure planning strategies. As Chapter 4 shows, some of the experts argued that planners were largely disconnected, even isolated, from mainstream infrastructure planning in their local authority. Other expert observers had gained the impression that planners operate much more proactively, and are rather more "in the loop", within their own local authorities. These individual impressions have

formed on the basis of direct personal observations by these experts through their own work with particular local authorities. Questions were included in the survey which tried to establish whether the personal impressions provided by experts in the early investigative stages of this study were in any way representative when compared against a more extensive cross section of views from the practicing planners canvassed as part of the survey.

In addition to the mixed views of the experts, previous research studies have created a negative general impression about the planners' tendency to collaborate with other groups (Lambert, 2006; Baker & Hincks, 2010; Baker et al, 2011). Lambert (2006) examined planner involvement in local strategic partnerships under New Labour and presented evidence to show that local authority planners were far from enthusiastic in engaging with other colleagues and agencies. More recently, research into participation and stakeholder involvement in local and regional planning has questioned the way planners deal with stakeholders and cast doubt on the quality of stakeholder involvement, arguing that,

> "The findings {we presented} were somewhat mixed. We found some evidence of earlier and more widespread forms of involvement than commonly seen before the 2004 reforms. However, this positive message was somewhat overshadowed by the slow progress that was being made in effectively involving a broader range of stakeholders and a disappointing lack of innovation in the techniques used to target and involve different types of stakeholders" (Baker et al, 2011, p.953)

An important aspect of the survey was to establish what the planners who took part had to say about all these issues and about collaborating across all stakeholder organisations on infrastructure planning. Importantly, the survey sought to understand how planners are connecting with the elite stakeholder groups, upon whose involvement and cooperation infrastructure provision for local plan implementation depends. Within the context of the key issues raised in the preceding chapters about planner/ stakeholder engagement, the comments made by the planners themselves on engaging with the network can be presented.

Corporate Centre

The stringent public sector cuts imposed since 2008, and the history of struggling to implement English spatial planning, make establishing how planners commonly view cooperation with the Chief Executive and the corporate management team; and the political leadership of the council an important issue. Potentially, this is an extremely sensitive area for the study to explore, and therefore, in completing the survey, planners were advised that their responses would only be used anonymously and as cumulative / generalised data to encourage them to be more open about their opinions. The potential controversies over engagement within local authorities are numerous; public sector cuts will inevitably have created tensions over redundancies and restructuring, there will inevitably be internal frictions over cuts in services and pressures related to performance monitoring. Despite the delicacies, 97 planners provided responses. The bar chart (Fig 25. below) shows that the planners who responded were largely confident about securing a positive working

rapport with all the key corporate actors and political leadership. The slightly higher level of support from the corporate management team is likely to be a result of the greater operational contact. The wider implications which can be drawn about the role of planners in the context of the challenges facing the public sector is considered in detail in chapter 8.

Fig.25 Planners & Corporate Centre

National Online Survey 2011
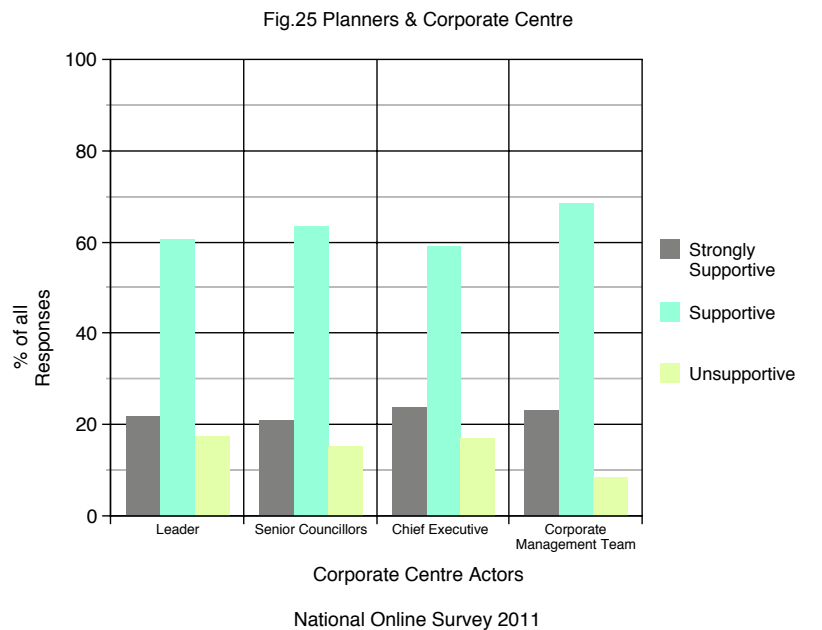
Although there is a general sense amongst planners that they are now working in closer partnership with corporate colleagues, some problems still remain in how they work in closer partnership. These comments are in response to Q.32, which asked planners about the level of support they felt they had amongst corporate colleagues concerning their involvement in infrastructure delivery groups. 23 participants volunteered further comment and of these 20 expressed concerns. The following are three examples of the concerns raised:

" There is a general problem with planners being marginalised within the local authority despite its aspirations for major growth" (SW Planner Q. 32/9)

"The core strategy and therefore infrastructure planning is seen as a job for the planning department to get on with"
E. Midlands Planner Q.32/6)

"I don't know but I suspect planners are viewed with suspicion by the Chief Exec and Councillors and definitely by other service areas such as property services"
(W. Midlands Planner Q.32/14).

In their responses, the planners generally argue that they are a driving force in initiating infrastructure delivery groups within their local authority as shown in Fig 26. This is an important finding from the survey as some of the experts previously interviewed did not consider planners to have much influence over the corporate body on infrastructure planning. It is also important to note that sub regional partnerships lag behind in instigating infrastructure delivery planning. Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) were, in general, only in a fledgling state in the autumn of 2011. The role of LEPs in infrastructure delivery is likely to gain prominence as these groups become more established. The future of LEPs and their level of cooperation with local authority planners is discussed further in chapter 8.

Fig.26 Initiators of Infrastructure Delivery Groups

National Online Survey 2011
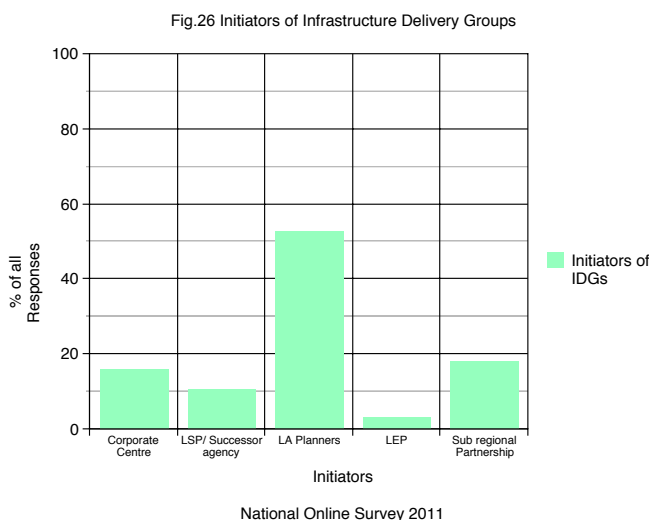
From the views expressed in the survey, planners appear enthusiastic about extending their involvement at a corporate level on infrastructure planning through achieving more personal input into corporate led Infrastructure Delivery Groups (Fig 27). Some planners maintain that they would have corporate support if they were to be more widely involved, as the following comment shows,

" Planners are currently not involved in any infrastructure delivery groups - but this would have the support of some senior managers" (NW Planner, Q.32/21).

Unsurprisingly, no planners wanted to reduce their involvement, which further emphasises the point that planners want to participate in strategic infrastructure planning at all levels in the local authority.

Fig.27 Planner Input into Corporate Infrastructure Delivery Groups

National Online Survey 2011
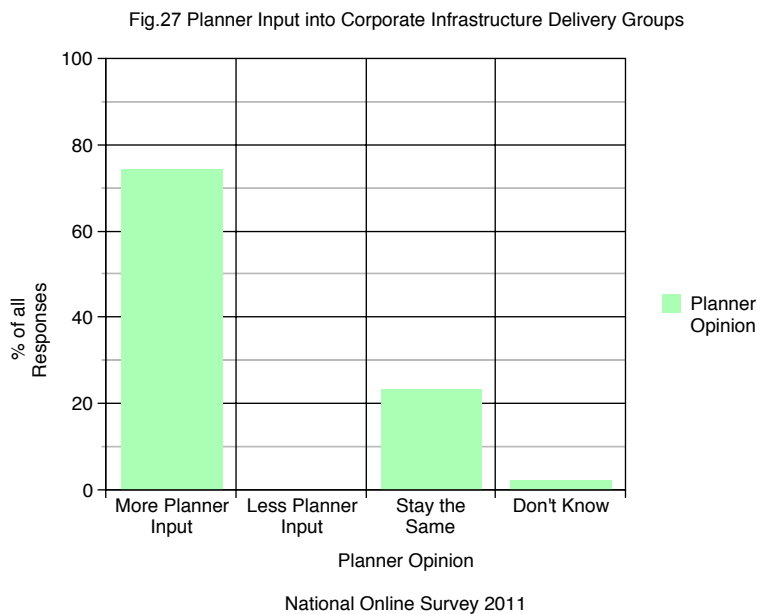
Local Authority Departments

The survey results show that planners are increasingly engaging with their local authority departmental colleagues, and that these interactions are operationally useful and productive for developing Infrastructure Delivery Plans. Almost 90% of the planners who took part in the survey considered themselves to be interacting with many other departments within their authority. The possible drivers of these developments are considered further in the concluding chapter in the context of the wider fiscal stringencies imposed by the Coalition government since May 2010. Over a third of the 153 planners who answered this question, considered themselves to be fully engaged with their counterparts in this group. It is clear that some re-structuring has been occurring to reinforce, and give added impetus, to inter departmental joint working,

" We have since re-organised departments to combine what was the team for strategic planning in terms of structure plan and policy development and the education planning team" (SW Planner, Q.16/13)

Development Management

The survey reveals some evidence of a persistent problem surrounding

fractured planning teams where there are clear differences in

understanding and approach between those planners whose focus is on

forward planning and those who operate as part of development

management. Only two comments were raised in the survey which directly

refer to these types of problems within the planning teams themselves but,

never the less, they are worthy of note.

" The policy planners appear to be convinced, however DC officers it is difficult to engage them and to ensure they have a full understanding of the requirements of any S106 and how the money will be spent etc.... We are trying to minimise this conflict through training sessions with providers and the DC officers"
(E. Midlands Planner, Q.16/8)

" I am working on the IDP and can really see the value of the infrastructure planning. However, colleagues, even planners sadly, still struggle to see why infrastructure planning is so important when planning for an area. As a professional you need to keep banging the drum for infrastructure planning. I think infrastructure planning will be just as important as conventional development plans in the future because its more focused on partnership working"
(NE Planner, Q.16/14)

Neighbouring Local Authorities

Planners were also asked in the survey about their involvement in developing cross boundary cooperation between authorities. Working co operatively, on an inter-authority basis has never been more important in the light of the revocation of the regional tier and the Coalition Government's emphasis on the "duty to co operate". The NPPF is explicit about the responsibilities now being placed upon the sub national tier,

> "Local planning authorities should work collaboratively with other bodies to ensure that strategic priorities across local boundaries are properly co-ordinated and clearly reflected in individual Local Plans" (CLG, 2011a, para, 179)

These recent policy and legislative developments place greater responsibility on local authorities to work on strategic issues which benefit the entire region, and to work proactively with Local Enterprise Partnerships. Effective communication about infrastructure projects with neighbouring authorities is also fundamental to the successful integration of major infrastructure, such as major transport projects, or new initiatives which occur for example water trading.

Fig.28 Extent of Cross Boundary Working

National Online Survey 2011

224
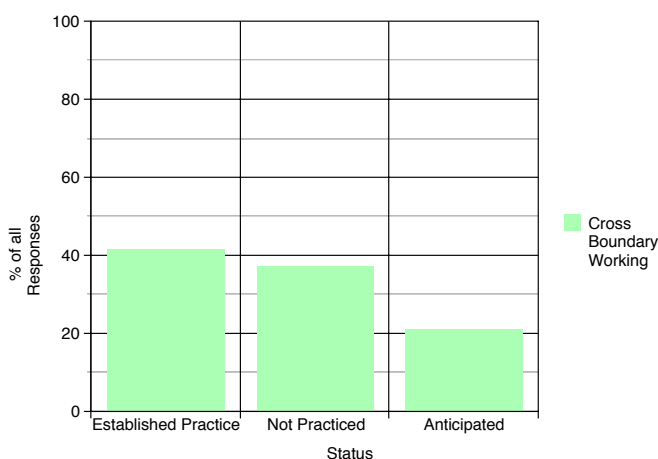
Fig 28. shows that over half of the 152 planners who answered this question about working on a cross boundary basis are already co operating with neighbouring authorities, and more than half of the remainder have plans to do so in the near future. Where cross boundary co operation is a feature of practice, planners explained that there were many benefits including improving the quality of IDP data and more effective use of staffing resources. Overall, for those who already have some background in working with other local authority planning colleagues, this had been a positive experience and this is shown in more detail in the planners' supplementary remarks. In general, planners felt that the experience of collaboration had improved confidence in joint working and strengthened their commitment to this approach. One planner commented that the greatest advantage was that,

"Infrastructure bodies are more likely to respond to a joint request for dialogue from a group of authorities" (E. Midlands Planner, Q.19/16)

The following are examples of written comments provided by planners in the survey, which show something of the type of cross boundary practices from regions across the country. The comments were made by planners in response to Q.17 which asked if planners were working on infrastructure planning jointly with other local authorities. A total of 66 participants provided further explanatory information which described the various approaches and initiatives which are underway. The following have been selected to show some typical of examples from the feedback.

"Planners from all {County name omitted} authorities meet on a regular basis to discuss infrastructure planning. Where relevant we share information and aim for a consistent approach where possible"
(East of England Planner, Q.17/12)

"We are currently considering commissioning a strategic infrastructure study jointly with other authorities in the city region" (NW Planner, Q.17/1)

" All the local authorities within the county meet regularly to discuss cross boundary infrastructure issues and the future CIL charging schedules"
(SE Planner, Q17/3)

" Key infrastructure issues cut across the urban area. Good history of joint working but some political differences amongst authorities"
(SW Planner, Q.17/25)

"We are a county council, working with the district councils on infrastructure planning work. We also plan on engaging with neighbouring counties/ districts over any emerging cross boundary issues."
(W.Midlands Planner, Q.17/67)

"We have a joint draft Core Strategy and IDP with a neighbouring authority. A series of infrastructure workshops were also held with a third authority. Discussions relating to potential CIL joint working currently involve four authorities" (E.Midlands Planner, Q.17/54)

"Not at present, apart from the County Council, but it will be essential as this work develops to get agreement with neighbouring authorities, particularly under the new NPPF duty to co operate, and the proposed new test of soundness." (SE Planner, Q.17/58)

In question 19 participants were asked to outline the benefits which they felt had been derived from joint working. 17 people provided additional written responses to this question. 9 of the written answers gave specific examples of the benefits associated with working with other authorities such as improvements in strategic alignment and facilitating a more powerful voice with infrastructure provider agencies. The remaining 8 written response were more circumspect saying that joint working was at too early stage to comment. Concerns were also raised about the amount of time involved and the impact of time factors when planners are under continued pressure to speed up their practices as follows,

"There ought to be advantages but in practice joint working means going at the pace of the slowest and trying to reconcile objectives of different authorities"
(W. Midlands Planner. Q.19/15)

"Potentially has made the work more complex and therefore longer, but ensures a greater joined up thinking and identification on cross boundary issues"
E. Midlands Planner. Q.19/11)

" It is too early to tell but joint-working should improve delivery and strengthen commitment to implementation. It is perhaps effective use of staff resources. It certainly does NOT lead to speeded up IDP preparation."
(E. Midlands Planner. Q.19/13)

Infrastructure Stakeholders

The legislative and policy framework stresses that engagement to co-ordinate the delivery of infrastructure must be wide ranging. Explicit in the policy approach is the need to consult and liaise across a wide spectrum of stakeholders and provider agencies from other sectors (DCLG, 2008a; DCLG, 2008b; DCLG, 2011c). Questions were included in the survey to determine whether there was any sense that a significant number of planners were making progress in complying with this requirement. This section investigates planner engagement with local authority partners on infrastructure provision, but has also gone further to consider the degree to which planners are liaising with a much wider body of organisations and agencies who operate externally and independently to the local authority framework. Fig 29. identifies the infrastructure stakeholder partners with whom planners confirm through their survey answers that have at least established some level of early contact. Presenting the list of potential partners in this way conveys the complexity and time consuming nature of the task which has been set for every individual local planning authority in the country. Fig 29. is subdivided into two main groups, Group A, lists the infrastructure provider partners operating within the local authority. Group B summarises the spectrum of infrastructure partners who operate externally or on the periphery to the local authority.

Fig 29. Infrastructure Partner Categories (Source: Author)		
Group A **Internal Local Authority**	Transport	Energy	Water & Drainage
	Waste	Public Realm	Historic Legacy
	Open Space	Affordable Housing	Education
	Children's Services	Health & Social Care	Community Services
	Leisure Services		
Group B **Peripheral & External to the Local Authority**	Highways Agency	Network Rail	Bus Companies
	Airport Authorities	Energy Providers	Port & Harbour Authorities
	Sustrans	Department of Transport	DVLA
	British Waterways	OFGEN	Strategic Health Authority
	OFWAT	Water Companies	Environment Agency
	BT	OFCOM	English Heritage
	National Park Authorities	Natural England	River Catchment Authorities
	Registered Social Landlords	Universities	DWP
	Strategic Health Authorities	Primary Care Trust	Post Office
	DBERR	Police Authority	Fire Authority
	Ambulance Trust	Ministry of Justice	Home Office
	Places of Worship	Charities	
	Parish Councils	Neighbourhood Groups	Community Groups
	Residents & Tenants Associations	Other Voluntary Sector Groups	Local Business Community

The planners who responded to the survey confirmed that they are engaging across all the agencies indicated in Fig 29. In total, the table of infrastructure partners contains 54 categories, and encompasses a huge variety of individual agencies. Fig 29. demonstrates very clearly the scalar challenges confronting planners in connecting with agencies who are likely to have an impact on the plan making process in their individual local authority areas. The information collected from the planners in the survey corroborates earlier estimates about the scalar complexities anticipated in encouraging planners to adopt a more integrated approach. As explained in Chapter 4, early estimates produced at the time spatial planning was introduced into the English planning system suggested that local authority planners would have to engage with more than 100 different stakeholders (ODPM, 2004a), and further work has similarly been based around producing very extensive lists of potential provider agencies with whom planners would need to make contact (Morphet, 2011a, pp. 146-150).

It is likely to be the case that some of the agencies in this group, such as the Strategic Health Authority or Police Authority, may have more established and stronger long term associations with the planning authority through local strategic partnerships or other operational activities. But a proportion of the agencies listed present even greater challenges. For instance, there may be any number of individual Registered Social Landlords or charities operating in the area at any one time. Keeping track of the ebb and flow of organisations over time may be a challenge to the planners in itself. Other key infrastructure providers external to the local

authority may be quite difficult to trace, be transient, or simply unreceptive to developing a dialogue.

Through their survey responses, planners show that they are making some headway in establishing contact with the considerable numbers of relevant participants to at least ensure that an appropriate level of evidence has been gathered to inform the plan making process. However, as a note of caution, planner assessments of their own progress also needs to be evaluated against the findings of other research which has established that the actual quality of stakeholder consultation by planners can be of variable quality (Baker et al, 2010; ibid, 2011).

It is also the case that effective infrastructure planning depends upon developing far more robust forms of engagement which extend beyond the consultative process and into the long term (Legacy, 2010). Recent research into stakeholder engagement in England has so far been focused on the consultative activities between planners and stakeholders (Baker et al, 2010). A logical extension of this work is to determine the prospects for the emergence of more sophisticated forms of dialogue as time goes on, using published research from Australia as a model (Legacy, 2010). If planners are to inform and influence the future direction of the service plans and investment strategies of the key infrastructure stakeholders, as the legislative framework proposes, then local planners must work to develop and establish far more enduring forms of engagement with the agencies most likely to have an impact on local plan implementation.

Identifying the Key External Stakeholders

The survey responses have been used to identify the key external stakeholders / infrastructure provider agencies which feature prominently across the majority of local plans. These agencies are an important component of the elite stakeholder group identified in previous research which is described in more detail in the literature review for this study (Baker et al, 2010). Achieving the involvement of these key agencies lies at the heart of effective local infrastructure planning, because without their cooperation and advice,

> ".. the local planning authority would find it difficult or even impossible to implement plans" (Baker et al, 2010, p.576)

The data from the survey has been used cumulatively to produce the list shown as Fig 30. For example, 139 respondents, or 91.4% of the 152 planners who answered this question, stated that they were engaging with the Environment Agency on the infrastructure requirements associated with their local plan and IDP.

	Fig. 30		
	Priority Infrastructure Partners External to LA		
Ranking	Agency	No. of Planners Engaging	%
1	Environment Agency	139	91.4
2	Primary Care Trust	136	89.4
3	Highways Agency	131	86.1
4	Police Authority	131	86.1
5	Fire Authority	126	82.8
6	Natural England	122	80.2
7	Energy Providers	117	76.9
8	Water Companies	113	74.3
9	English Heritage	111	73.0
10	Network Rail	111	73.0
11	Strategic Health Authority	110	72.3
12	Registered Social Landlords	106	69.7
Totals		**152**	

(Source: Author)

This group of external infrastructure provider agencies appear critical in the vast majority of the local plans and IDPs produced by the participants in the survey. Where certain infrastructure stakeholders are requested to have input into large numbers of individual local authority strategies, it would be beneficial for some more strategic co ordination of their involvement to occur at some higher level in the organisation to take a more regional or national level approach to engagement. Identifying the key external provider stakeholders can be used to promote more robust

levels of partnership working which will be necessary to facilitate the

negotiations which are likely to be required over the life time of the plan.

The survey contains information which helps to identify the organisations

and agencies concerned, and which would therefore prove useful for

developing more effective partnerships in the future.

Agenda: Policy Integration

Reference to the conceptual diagram (Chapter 4) shows that the second

component of the conceptual framework is concerned with policy

integration. In the context of this study, policy integration relates to

understanding whether policy making is producing more targeted

infrastructure planning information; whether policy synergies are possible

between LPAs and the wider body of infrastructure stakeholders; and

whether long held concerns about policy divergences are being overcome.

Like the preceding section about the Network, this section explains the

legislative context which makes policy integration an important factor and

systematically addresses the points raised under the Agenda heading in

the conceptual framework diagram (Chapter 4). Previous research into

infrastructure planning has advised that key issues or infrastructure topics

necessary to achieve the stated vision described in the local plan must be

identified in order to facilitate mediation and coordination of the relevant

infrastructure requirements of the LDF (DCLG, 2008b: for further details

see Chapters 2 and 4). The survey findings help to explore what progress

planners have made in identifying the key infrastructure issues that are

likely to have an impact on the delivery of their local plans.

Identifying the Show Stopper Issues

As explained in the earlier stages of this chapter, the survey provides evidence that significant progress has been made in producing IDPs. The level of progress which has been made means that many of the planners who took part in the survey are now able to make informed comments about the infrastructure requirements necessary to achieve the delivery of the local plan. The survey questionnaire invited planners to provide details about the infrastructure issues upon which the success or failure of their local plan depended; that is, the 'show stopper' issues. In total, 86 of the planners who responded to the survey felt able, as a result of their work on local development plans, to provide details about the key show stopper issues affecting their area. (Fig 31)

Fig 31. Show Stopper Issues		
Infrastructure Issue	**Number of References**	**%**
Water Supply & Waste Water Treatment	28	21.0
Flood Risk	17	12.7
Transport Network (General)	26	19.5
Road Network	20	15.0
Rail Network	3	2.2
Education Facilities	16	12.0
Energy Supply	7	5.2
Open Space	4	3.0
Health Facilities	3	2.2
Community Services	1	0.7
General / Non Specific Concerns	8	6.0
Totals	133	

Fig 31. provides a summary of the findings from text analysis of the detailed comments made by 86 planners in the survey. The data shows clearly that the experience of producing an IDP had led local planners across the country to conclude that water and transport infrastructures are most likely to dramatically influence the success or failure of the local plan. These two main show stopper categories have also been explored further using the survey data to investigate what has been included under these two main headings of water and transport. The results are shown in the following two sub sections.

Water Infrastructure

Fig 32. shows the results of further text analysis on the survey responses to clarify what the planners have included as water related show stopper issues. It is clear that waste water treatment is the main concern, followed by flood risk and defences. This more detailed information provides an important basis upon which to conduct more detailed investigations with the relevant infrastructure stakeholders on questions of urban development. Fig 32. shows that planners require more robust partnership arrangements and longer term engagement with the agencies which are responsible for water treatment, provision and supply, sewerage treatment, and flood risk / defences. The survey data therefore suggests that understanding infrastructure planning necessitates further research with both the Environment Agency and with private water companies.

Fig.32 Water Related Show Stoppers
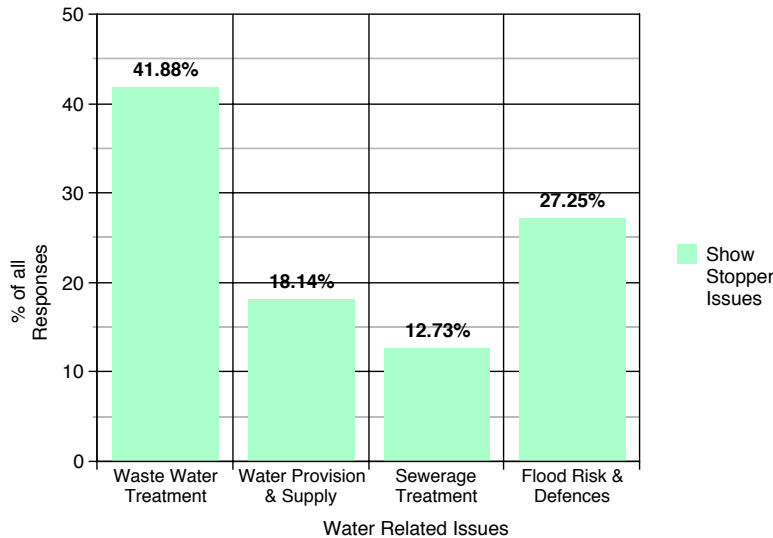
National Online Survey 2011

Transport Infrastructure

Further text analysis on the survey results has similarly been conducted to

explore the planner comments about transport as a specific topic. The

'general transport' category in Fig 33. covers a variety of transport issues,

but a significant number of planners identified strategic road network

capacity as a key show stopper issue. The results of the analysis (Fig 33.)

show that further research is necessary with the Highways Agency as the

agency with primary responsibility for the strategic road network. Further

research would be necessary with the planners who took part in the survey

to obtain more details about other forms of transport, however the

Highways Agency can be consulted in the first instance about their

involvement with other transport agencies with who they liaise for the

purposes of promoting an integrated approach to transport.

Fig.33 Transport Related Show Stoppers

% of all Responses

56.66%

37.74%

5.61%

Transport General | Strategic Road Network Capacity | Railway Network

Transport Related Issues

National Online Survey 2011
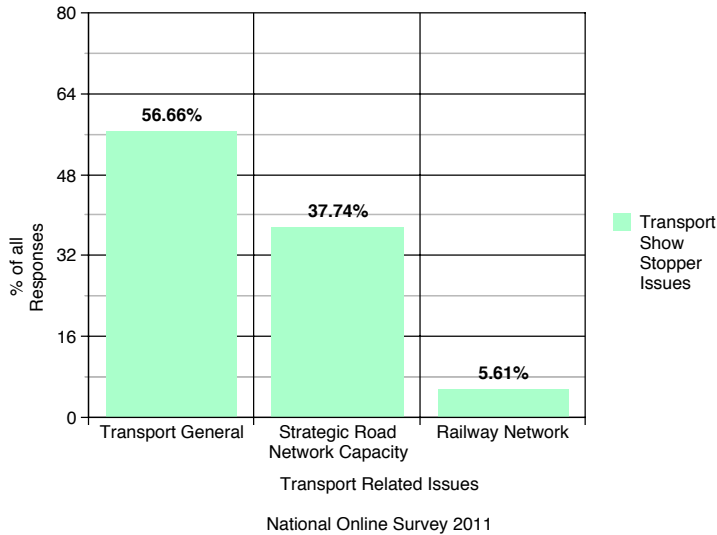
Engagement: Stakeholder Consultation & Dialogue

The need to understand the attitude of planners towards engagement with

infrastructure delivery partners is the final stage of the three components

of the conceptual framework which underpin this study (see the conceptual

framework diagram in chapter 4). Like the Network and Agenda sections

above, this section raises the legislative and academic contextual issues

and summarises the findings from the survey about attitudinal change

amongst the participants. Assessing attitudinal changes amongst planners

is given prominence in this study in order to take forward the questions

posed in the planning literature about the need for culture change (Nadin,

2006; Shaw, 2006; Shaw & Lord, 2007), and to explore the ideas put

forward in a wider body of literature which suggests ways in which

attitudinal changes are progressed over time (Huxham & Vangen, 2005;

Stead & Meijers, 2009)

Attitudes Towards Engagement

It is clear from the survey feedback that planners have developed some sense of the importance of engaging and working collaboratively with other delivery partners, not simply because they have learned the language of spatial planning, but because they now understand through practical experience why engagement is necessary to develop integrated planning. This section draws upon direct quotations from the survey participants which provides the evidence to support this view. Overall the survey data suggests that engagement with partners is an integral, and widely practiced, feature of local infrastructure planning.

Some of the comments received certainly demonstrate that the rhetorical language of engagement has permeated the culture of planning. The following written responses demonstrate this,

" The importance of stakeholder input is recognised throughout as absolutely critical" (E. Midlands Planner, Q.16/18)

"Infrastructure study has been completed as evidence for core strategy EIP. This fully engaged all relevant infrastructure stakeholders"
(Yorkshire & Humber Planner, Q.16/9)

{It} "Is essential" (SW Planner, Q16/19)

However, the majority of the comments received reveal a more informed insight into planner attitudes. Some of the planner feedback shows that their comments have arisen through considerable levels of direct personal experience of engagement, and some associated understanding about the practical purpose of engagement. The majority of these responses show

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that planners have recognised that engagement is essential in order to

develop critical synergies concerning capital funding programmes and

investment plans,

"It is absolutely essential to engage with other agencies, partners and service providers in agreeing to provide what infrastructure is required, how, and by when, and then building this into their capital funding programmes. This information is vital to the phasing of development with our Core Strategy" (SE Planner, Q.16/20)

" Prior to the production of the IDP we did not really engage with infrastructure providers. This engagement is essential for identifying the infrastructure requirements to support growth and also for influencing their investment plans to ensure they invest in the areas that are likely to see the most growth in the future" (NW Planner, Q.16/21)

"Other agencies and organisations need to become more engaged and more pro active, the majority of them run on annual and 5 year business plans compared to the core strategy which is 15-20 years of forward planning." (SE Planner, Q.16/5)

Recent practical experience has also shown some survey participants the

potential dangers which can arise where they fail to engage early in the

infrastructure planning process,

" When successful consultation has been undertaken, very useful infrastructure solutions have been identified. Otherwise solutions have not been identified and this has resulted in objections from agencies who should have engaged earlier in the process"
(Yorkshire & Humber Planner, Q.16/11)

It is also clear that planners are prepared to maintain a positive outlook on engagement, even where there is a long lead in time before any practical benefits can be secured,

"The potential is certainly there, but given that the core strategy was adopted less than a year ago, the results are as yet unclear."
(London Borough Planner, Q.16/17)

Planner Attitudes Towards External Agencies

The survey comments do however reveal some important concerns about the current attitudes of planners towards engagement with external infrastructure provider agencies. Despite making claims about their own personal commitment to engagement, there appears to be a widely held scepticism amongst planners about the willingness of the infrastructure provider agencies to respond positively to the process of developing local plans. The suspicion which is felt by planning practitioners is evident across a considerable number of their written comments. This view is a significant finding from the survey, and therefore warrants quite a detailed summary of the types of justification planners have provided (Fig 34.):-

Fig 34. Planner Attitudes Towards External Agencies
Summary of Planner Comments
1.*" I think planners have always been convinced of the merit of engaging with other agencies, partners and services - isn't this what spatial planning is all about? However, the problem seems to me, to be convincing these other agencies, partners etc of the value of engaging with planners"* (NW Planner, Q16/22)
2. *" We know the importance already. But infrastructure providers don't seem to!"* (East of England Planner, Q.16/24)
3. *" We may be convinced of the benefit, however I am not convinced that infrastructure providers feel the same"* (East of England Planner, Q.16/16)
4. *Though whether partners see the relevance of the planners' need to engage with them is a moot point"* (SE Planner, Q.16/23)
5. *"More convinced of the need to continue to keep trying to push the need for all organisations to think about infrastructure planning but less convinced that it is something that they are ever going to fully engage with."* (SE Planner, Q. 16/25)
6. *" Borough Council has undertaken extensive consultation with infrastructure/ service providers to inform evidence base for Core Strategy. However, no responses were received from the majority of consultees. This calls into question the level of engagement that infrastructure providers are prepared to enter into with an LPA as most seemed disinterested including those on the Councils Local Strategic Partnership (LSP)"* (SE Planner, Q.16/6)
7. *"Important to engage, but creative discussions on solutions difficult"* (E. Midlands Planner, Q.16/7)

The comments in Fig 34. suggest that, on the whole, planners are striving to overcome their reservations in a constructive manner. The majority appear largely accepting that developing partnerships is not a quick or easy process. However, one comment in particular stood out because of the much more confrontational tone,

"Wrong question, we have to engage with other agencies to plan properly but what we need is more power to make others cooperate constructively. I.E. demand information from water companies even if they think it is commercially sensitive" (West Midlands Planner, Q.16/15)

Planner Attitudes Towards Engagement: Water & Transport

As other parts of the survey analysis had revealed that key show stopper issues largely revolved around water and transport, more detailed investigation has been conducted to understand planners attitudes towards engaging with the main infrastructure provider agencies responsible for these themes - the HA and the EA. The additional analysis revealed a real contrast in the attitudes planners had formed towards the Environment Agency and the Highways Agency.

On the basis of the survey responses planners generally considered the Highways Agency to adopt a greater degree of obstructiveness, inflexibility, and a more confrontational approach. Only 1 direct reference to the Highways Agency was positive.

> *"Whilst no show stoppers identified at this stage some agencies i.e. Highways Agency have been very proactive in providing possible solutions " (Yorkshire & Humber Planner, Q. 15/3)*

The following table provides a summary of the more negative comments made about the Highways Agency (Fig 35.):-

Fig 35. Planner Attitudes Towards The Highways Agency
Summary of Planner Comments
1. *"The HAs approach to this issue was not found to be the collaborative approach expected for the infrastructure planning process, instead it was more confrontational and based on objecting at formal consultation stages. This required quantitative assessment work to be undertaken with little co operation from the HA. This confrontation approach... protecting each organisations interests"* (SE Planner, Q.15/32)
2. *"The Highways Agency can be obstructive at times, but their ability to place holding directives to enable transport issues to be resolved helps us too"* (SW Planner, Q.15/17)
3. *"Highways Agency very obstructive - not prepared to try and identify solutions, only want to stop development. Other agencies generally more positive."* (East of England Planner, Q.15/7)
4. *" Transport, Highways Agency, very difficult to negotiate with where highways infrastructure required. Difficulties in identifying the required infrastructure in the first place and then in discussing realistic solutions"* (E.Midlands Planner, Q.15/11)
5. *"The HA want every combination subject to expensive modeling, but we have issues about resourcing this"* (SE Planner, Q.15/28)

By contrast, planners commented far more positively about the

impressions they had formed about working with the Environment Agency.

The survey responses contained only one comment which was overtly

negative,

> *" In respect of water and nature issues collaboration means don't even think about developing any where near. Not so much collaboration more do as we say otherwise its a show stopper"* (NE Planner, Q.15/11)

The remainder of the planner feedback about the Environment Agency

was on the whole more positive, whilst recognising the associated

challenges such as the amount of time involved, and the complexities

which can arise in providing information, as the following table shows

(Fig 36.):-

Fig 36. Planner Attitudes Towards The Environment Agency
Summary of Planner Comments
1. *"Joint strategic solution identified in partnership with EA"* (SW Planner, Q.15/25)
2. *" Effective working with water company"* (SE Planner, Q.15/23)
3. *" The EA and water company are committed to seeking solutions but they are moving very slowly, and this is holding up progress with the production of our Core Strategy"* (SE Planner, Q.15/28)
4.*"With regard to water resources the relevant bodies Water Company, EA and Natural England have been engaged, but clearly have their own priorities. While there is an obvious desire to find a solution, it can be very hard to get concrete information from them"* (East of England Planner, Q.15/5)

Factors Affecting Local Planning Practice

The final part of this chapter explains what planners had to say more generally about their experiences of professional practice over recent years, addressing how electoral and policy changes have impacted on their ability to develop infrastructure planning in practice. Conducting the survey provided a unique opportunity to capture the opinions of practicing planners about the factors which they feel have either enabled or challenged local planning practice over recent years. The preceding chapters have also highlighted the issue of training for planners on infrastructure. As explained in chapters 2 - 4, New Labour commissioned extensive training via the Planning Advisory Service called the Steps Approach. However, the expert interviews with individuals personally involved in the training, demonstrated very differing views on the role of planners within the local authority on infrastructure planning (see chapter 4). It has therefore been important for the survey to seek the views of the planners on the training they have received. All these questions are discussed in this section.

Socio Political Influences on Planning Practice

Planners were asked to identify the factors which might have had an impact, either positive or negative, on the implementation of local plans and their associated infrastructure delivery plans. Fig 37. summarises the observations of planners on a variety of social, economic and political factors, and shows that the reasons which explain slow progress with local plan development are wide ranging and complex. There is no one single influencing factor, but the change of government, the revocation of

National Online Survey 2011

reg...   ...ainty surrounding

furt...   ...und impact upon the

app...   ...the survey was

conducted.

Fig.37 Obstacles to Developing IDPs

Inhibitory Factors

National Online Survey 2011
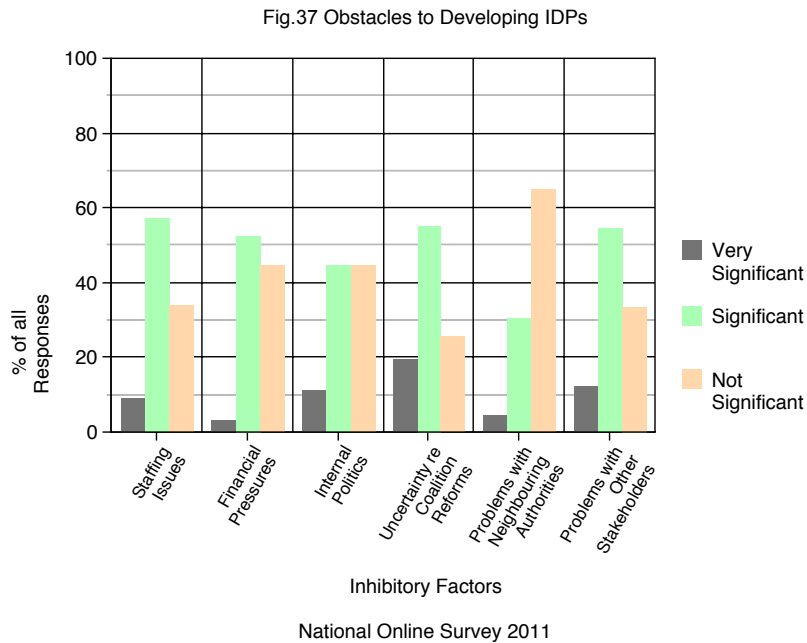
As a result of the particular circumstances being experienced during the
first few months of the Coalition, an additional question was posed to
explore the uncertainties created by the debates about planning policy
changes. The responses are shown in Fig 38.

Fig.38 Attitudes Towards Coalition Policy Changes

Coalition Policy Changes

National Online Survey 2011
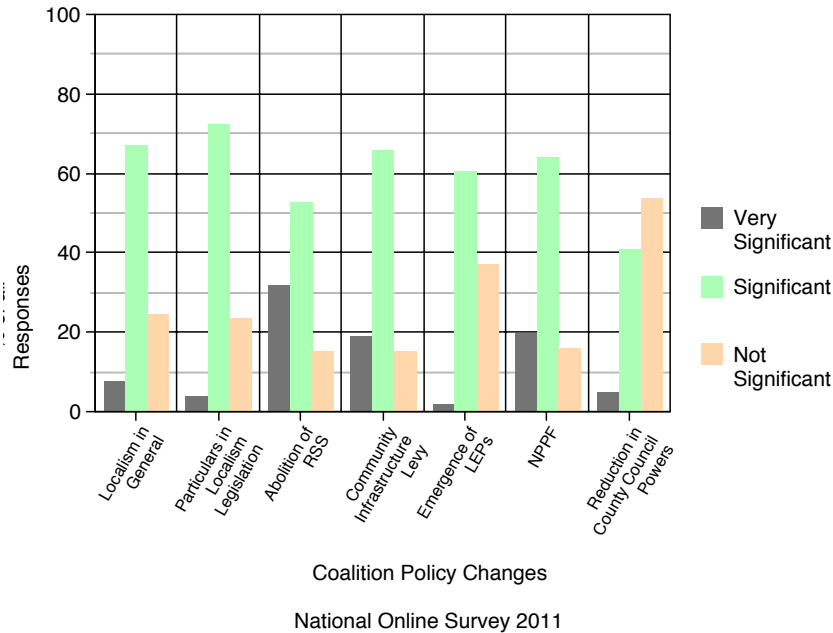
It is clear that planners were intensely concerned with the content and nature of the NPPF, which was the subject of a particularly turbulent consultation period during the survey, and the abolition of the RSS which had just recently occurred. The responses to this question also highlight the significance planners have generally placed on developing their community infrastructure levy strategy, although some academics have advised against seeing CIL as a major new source of funding (Morphet, 2011d&e). At the time of the survey, the challenges associated with localism, neighbourhood planning and the development of LEPs appear to have impacted to a slightly lesser extent in the minds of participants, but are key factors influencing the future of planning. These questions are likely to grow in significance as the new policy strategies start to filter through into practice.

Experiences of Training

Interviews conducted for this study with experts who have been responsible for training programs over the last decade revealed the existence of considerable difference in interpretation about infrastructure planning (see Chapter 4). These wide differences in understanding existed across all groups responsible for training, from government led training, to training by planning professional bodies and to private consultancies. In order to gain some overview of the ways planners themselves have received that training, a series of questions was posed about the training programs which had been delivered. Planners were also asked to provide an assessment of their future training needs. 109 planners said that they had already received training on infrastructure planning. Of the 99 respondents who provided further details about the provider of that training, a summary is provided in Fig 39. it should be noted that some of the 99 respondents who provided further details explained that they (or their local authority colleagues) had received training from a number of different sources over a period of time. It is clear that most of the planners had attended PAS training courses. These are likely to have been the Steps Approach, explained earlier in the study.

Fig.39 Training Providers
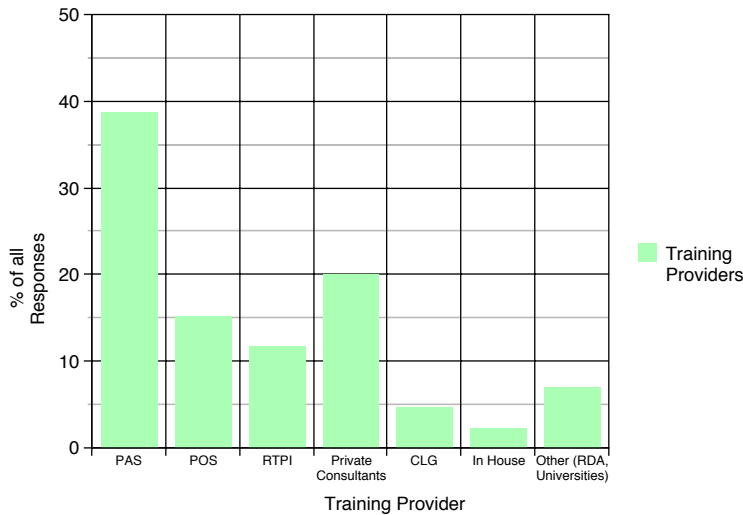
National Online Survey 2011

Planners were asked to comment on the value they felt they had derived from the various training experiences; 113 respondents did so. As shown in the earlier question, the majority had attended several courses conducted by different providers over a period of time and were therefore well placed to provide a general impression of the training which has been on offer. Fig 40. shows how relevant or useful planners found the training they had received.

Fig.40 Impact of Infrastructure Planning Training
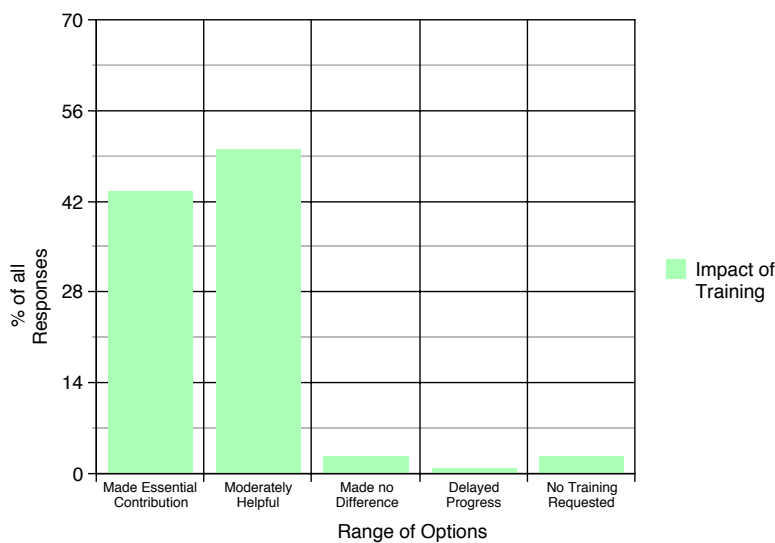
National Online Survey 2011

Fig 40. shows that over 90% of the 113 who answered the question, had found the training helpful; however the data suggests that further training support is clearly thought to be needed. When asked specifically whether they wanted more training, 83 planners said they definitely would benefit from more training, whilst a further 39 are considering the necessity of additional support.

Conclusions and Next Stages

The findings presented in this chapter reflect the first direct and extensive consultation with local authority planners about infrastructure planning practice across England since the 2004 reforms. The survey establishes that infrastructure planning is considered by planners to be an important part of local planning practice and that interest in infrastructure planning is widespread across all regions. It is, however, unclear whether local planners have begun to develop infrastructure planning practice as a result of their convictions about the importance of spatial planning; whether their interest in working with infrastructure delivery partners has emerged more organically from the intermediary role which Schon has argued is intrinsic to the role of the planner (Schon, 1983); or, indeed, whether local planners have taken up the challenge laid down by the Coalition government to become more innovative.

Progress is clearly being made in local authorities with infrastructure delivery plans. The planners who took part in the survey confirmed that they are consulting across a vast range of internal and external agencies to develop their infrastructure planning strategies. As a result of the progress which has been made with IDPs and Schedules, local planners are now better able to identify the local infrastructure issues which are most likely to influence, either positively or negatively, the successful implementation of their local plan. Collating data from the survey has exposed the widespread importance of two particular infrastructure topics; water and transport. Further investigation through text analysis of the survey data has also identified the key provider agencies with whom local planners need to engage in order to co ordinate the delivery of this essential infrastructure. These agencies are the Environment Agency; Private Water Companies; and the Highways Agency.

Planners appear convinced about the importance of engaging on infrastructure planning to inform the local plan; increasingly so, since the benefits associated with co operation are now beginning to emerge in planning practice. However, the survey participants expressed their personal concerns about the commitment of some of the external infrastructure provider agencies towards developing reciprocal operational arrangements. It is clear that the views of external stakeholders on working in closer partnership are not well understood and require further investigation. It is possible to summarise some of the points of friction which seem to fuel the mistrust detected amongst the survey participants.

On the basis of the survey feedback these issues can be summarised as follows,

- A general lack of interest amongst provider agencies about getting involved in the plan making process, due to a failure to appreciate its relevance to the corporate or strategic interests of a particular agency or organisation

- Provider agency reluctance to supply commercially sensitive information

- A genuine difficulty in providing the longer term strategic investment planning information planners need to inform local plans

- Intransigent attitude which is displayed through insistence upon costly technical modeling of specific proposals to provide greater certainty before making investment decisions

- Mutual frustration resulting from the inevitable slowness created by partnership working

The survey has also exposed clear differences in planners perception of the attitude and approach between the key infrastructure provider agencies; the Environment Agency and the Highways Agency. The Highways Agency appears to have adopted a more adversarial or confrontational approach across a number of areas of the country in recent experience. Some further investigation with these provider agencies is therefore necessary to establish whether this is a fair reflection, and typical of these organisations. The second stage of the empirical work in this study therefore requires detailed interviews and focus groups therefore explores all these issues further to understand opinions and collaborative experiences in the local planning process from the perspective of the key infrastructure stakeholders. It does so through a series of further interviews and focus groups with staff in the agencies concerned in a chosen English region.

CHAPTER 7

EXPLORING INFRASTRUCTURE PLANNING IN PRACTICE
STAKEHOLDER AGENCIES

Introduction

This second empirical chapter focuses on the stakeholder agencies. Using the

survey findings as a focus for the enquiry and a stimulus for discussion, this

second part of the research has explored the perspective of the infrastructure

providers on working within the local planning making process. The

infrastructure providers investigated in this chapter are all part of the "elite

stakeholder" category described in the literature review and previous research

(Baker et al, 2010). Survey data presented in the previous chapter shows that

although planners attribute a high level of importance to the general principle of

engaging with infrastructure providers, many of the survey participants

expressed a lack of confidence that key stakeholders are equally convinced of

the importance of engaging in the process of informing the local plan. Planner

comments in the survey have therefore exposed the potential pinch points

which require further investigation with these key provider agencies; these are

explained fully in Chapter 6 and broadly relate to uncertainties about the level of

interest which really exists amongst external organisations in the local plan

making process, and their willingness and ability to provide important strategic

and investment information and support.

Against this uncertain backdrop, planners from local authorities across the country are discovering, as a result of developing their respective plans and strategies, that they need the particular cooperation of three important elite stakeholders, the Environment Agency, water companies and the Highways Agency to make their plans work. The survey shows that involvement between local authorities across the country and these three particular agencies will need to move forward from preliminary consultations, towards far more established, robust and enduring forms of engagement if the local plan is to be sustained for the next 15-20 years.

Understanding the provider agencies' response to engaging with individual local plans is particularly important in the light of the revocation of the regional tier of planning, and the additional challenges this presents in reconciling strategies on a wider spatial scale. All three of these infrastructure provider agencies have a responsibility to deliver infrastructure on a regional basis. This chapter seeks to understand how these agencies work with individual local authorities in this context. This chapter therefore investigates local plan making from the perspective of these three important infrastructure provider groups; identifying some of the strategic and policy pressures they are experiencing; examining the practical steps being initiated to improve collaboration on local plans; and exploring the cultures and attitudes of the respective agencies towards engaging with planners on infrastructure planning strategies. The research findings help to determine whether there is any validity to planner concerns about engagement with provider agencies and to explore ways in which any concerns can be resolved.

In contrast to the national perspective adopted in the previous chapter, this chapter focusses on local infrastructure planning in the North West Region. There are important reasons why the chapter is focused on the North West. As explained in Chapter 6, infrastructure planning is widely practiced across all regions, it is logical therefore to suggest that any region would provide an interesting insight into infrastructure provider roles and attitudes. However, the decision to focus on the North West allows the author to draw upon and develop previous research into infrastructure planning in the North West (Holt, 2009). A benchmarking exercise has already been conducted for a number of local authorities across the north west which provides a useful source of initial data. Key practitioner contacts have also been developed in the North West (Holt, 2009). In addition, precedents have been set in the academic literature regarding the use of multi scalar research methodologies, where national level data is supplemented by additional research into one particular region (Baker et al, 2010).

A regional approach facilitates a more direct dialogue with key operational staff working in the infrastructure stakeholder agencies, namely the Environment Agency, United Utilities plc and the Highways Agency. Adopting this methodological strategy is consistent with the emphasis that this study has placed on encouraging all those interviewed to reflect on the ways they have been working in practice (Schon,1983). With this important methodological principle in mind, this chapter draws upon interviews and focus group discussions with the teams in the Environment Agency, United Utilities and the Highways Agency. All the practitioners who took part are responsible for liaising directly with local authorities about infrastructure planning in the region. The

research which underpins this chapter has generated a comprehensive and unique insight into local infrastructure planning engagement from the stakeholder's perspective. Following on from a brief contextual overview on the progress amongst local authorities in the region on local development schemes, which helps to reorientate the study to the regional level, this chapter follows the structure set out in the conceptual framework. The research findings are therefore discussed sequentially to address the three conceptual themes, network, (organisational integration) agenda (policy integration) and engagement (stakeholder consultation & dialogue).

Context: Plan Making in the North West

To begin with, a web-based review was conducted for this study in the autumn of 2012 of local authorities in the north west to compare how individual LPAs are progressing with their respective Local Plan DPD, and the ensuing Site Allocations DPDs as part of their Local Development Scheme (LDS). The findings of the review are summarised in Fig 41. below. Appendix 6 provides more specific data from the review exercise. The information complements the survey and planning inspectorate data about national progress with Local Plans and IDPs (see Chapters 3 & 6), and reorientates the research focus for this part of the study. The web review provides an important indication of the anticipated progress about plan documents in the region up to 2016. The data provides a useful backdrop against which the attitudes of the provider agencies can be examined.

Fig 41. North West Local Development Scheme Review	2012				2013				2014				2015			
Local Authority Area	JAN	APR	JUL	OCT	JAN	APR	JUL	OCT	JAN	APR	JUL	OCT	JAN	APR	JUL	OCT
CHESHIRE																
Cheshire East	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	▨	▨	▨	▨				
Cheshire W & Chester	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■				
Halton BC	■	■	■	■												
Warrington BC	■	■	■	■	■	▨	▨	▨								
CUMBRIA																
Allerdale BC	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	▨	▨	▨					
Copeland BC	■	■	■	■	▨	▨	▨	▨								
Barrow in Furness BC	■	■	▨	▨	▨											
Carlisle Council	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	▨	▨	▨	▨	▨	▨	▨	▨
Eden DC	▨															
South Lakeland DC	▨	▨														
GTR MANCHESTER																
Bolton Met BC	▨	▨	▨	▨	▨	▨	▨	▨								
Bury Met BC	■	■	■	■	CS to be resubmitted March 2013, site allocations unspecified											
Manchester CC	■	■	▨	▨	▨	▨	▨	▨								
Oldham Met BC	▨	▨	▨	▨	▨	▨	▨	▨	▨	▨	▨					
Rochdale Met BC	■	CS withdrawn 18th April 2012, site allocations unspecified														
Salford City Council	■	■	site allocations unspecified													
Stockport Met BC	▨	▨	▨	▨	▨	▨	▨	▨								
Tameside Met BC	■	■	■	■	■	▨	▨	▨	▨	▨	▨	▨	▨			
Trafford Met B	■	▨	▨	▨	▨	▨	▨	▨								
Wigan Council	■	CS suspended for 6 months, site allocations unspecified														
LANCASHIRE																
Blackburn w Darwen BC	▨	▨	▨	▨	▨	▨	▨	▨								
Blackpool Council	■	consultation stage ongoing adoption date unspecified														
Burnley BC	data inaccessible															
Chorley BC	▨	▨	▨	▨												
South Ribble	▨	▨	▨	▨	▨	▨	▨									
Preston Council	▨	▨	▨	▨	▨											
Fylde BC	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	site alloc unspecified			
Hyndburn BC	■	▨	▨	▨	▨	▨	▨									
Lancaster CC	▨	▨	▨													
Pendle BC	■	■	consultation stage ongoing adoption date unspecified													
Ribble Valley BC	■	■	site allocations unspecified													
Rossendale BC	■	■	▨	▨	▨	▨	▨	▨	▨	▨	▨	▨				
West Lancs BC	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	water utilities IDP produced 2012								
Wyre BC	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	▨	▨	▨	▨	▨	▨
MERSEYSIDE																
Knowsley Met BC	■	■	■	■	■	■	▨	▨	▨	▨	▨	▨	▨	▨		
Liverpool CC	■	CS consultations ongoing, site allocations unspecified														
Sefton Council	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	site allocations unspecified						
St Helens Met BC	■	■	▨	▨	▨	▨	▨	▨	▨	▨	▨	▨				
Wirral Met BC	■	■	■	■	■	■	▨	▨	▨	▨	▨	▨	▨	▨	▨	

(Source: Author)

■ Core Strategy / Local Plan

▨ Site Allocations DPD

The review shows that progress with plan making amongst LPAs in the NW is

relatively slow, when compared to national figures provided in the survey. (see

Figs 8 & 9 in chapter 3 to cross reference the data in Fig 41 against the national

picture). Fig 41. shows that only 13 (33%) of NW LPAs, have already

successfully secured an adopted CS DPD. The table shows that authorities in

Cheshire are the poorest performing areas within the NW region. The website

review suggests, however, that certain areas within the NW that are working

collaboratively with neighbouring authorities are making faster, better overall

progress than other LPAs who are taking a more insular approach. For

example, two groupings of NW authorities have clearly made much more

speedy progress: The 10 Greater Manchester Authorities who make up the

Association of Greater Manchester Authorities (AGMA) and parts of Lancashire

where Chorley, South Ribble and Preston who have taken a joint approach to

strategic plans.

It is clear from the review that early work such as evidence gathering and initial

consultations related to developing Core Strategy / Local Plan and Site

Allocations DPDs will continue to occupy forward planning teams in the region

at least up to 2015. Although15 NW local authorities (38% of LPAs in the region)

are now actively involved in the preparatory stages of their site allocations

consultation, no local authority in the NW had a Site Allocations DPD adopted at

the time the review data was collected in the autumn of 2012. According to the

website review, four authorities (Eden, South Lakeland, Chorley and Lancaster)

anticipated that they might, however, achieve an adopted Site Allocations DPD

by the end of 2012.

<u>Network</u>

This section firstly provides some background information about each of the three agencies who were the subject of investigation, explaining very broadly their respective remit, roles and responsibilities. The information helps to explain the relevance of each of the agency's involvement in the local plan. Using information provided by practitioners in each agency, the section also explains the operational structures which have been established for engaging with local authorities in the north west.

The Environment Agency

The Environment Agency (EA) is the primary regulator for the water environment and the competent authority for the implementation of the Water Framework Directive and Water Act. The EA provides, regulates, advises and monitors performance on environmental infrastructure which includes water and waste. Water infrastructure is defined as water supply, waste water treatment, surface drainage, flood risk management. The EA regulates abstractions from, and discharges into, the water environment in England and Wales and is the environmental regulator of water company plans. The EA is responsible for flood risk management, and therefore provides data and advice to planning authorities on strategic plans and individual planning applications. The Agency is uniquely placed through on the ground experience and evidence gathered to advise central government and local authorities on the future planning, funding and delivery of environmental infrastructure, and works towards the implementation of a 25 year framework for planning water demand and new resources. (EA, 2007a; 2007b)

The Environment Agency Operational Structure

The Environment Agency's operational arrangements subdivide the north west region into two operational teams for planning liaison (recently renamed the Sustainable Places Team); a team of 8 deal with 24 local authorities in the north area, and 10 EA staff perform a similar role in the south from a base in Warrington. Each member of the team is responsible for a patch or group of 3/4 local authorities. They are also rotated to allow each officer to gain a better insight into the issues within different local authority areas. The face to face interviews and a focus group session were conducted with the whole of the Penrith team, which has operational responsibility for Cumbria and Lancashire. The Penrith team work closely with the south area team and feel that their comments are also representative of their south area colleagues.

United Utilities Water PLC

United Utilities Water PLC (UUW) owns and manages the regulated water and waste water network in the North West region, and has done so since water services were privatised in 1990. According to the UU Strategic Direction Statement and interviews with the Senior Planner for UU in the North West (United Utilities, 2010; Senior Planner Interview, 2011) the scale of UUW operational activity in the NW can be summarised as follows:-

• UUW serves a total population of 7 million
• 100 Water Treatment Works
• > 42,000 kilometres of water pipes
• 57,000 hectares of catchment land
• 600 Waste water treatment works (WWTWs)
• 70,000 kilometres of sewers
• UUW invested £3 billion in infrastructure between 2005-2010 (UUW, 2010, UU Asset Management Team Interviews, 2012)

UUW is regulated by the EA and is also bound by the terms of EU environmental initiatives such as the Water Framework Directive. In common with many other infrastructure providers, the water and sewerage undertakers are funded in 5 year periods (known as Asset Management Periods) and also have longer term cycles such as Water Resource Management Plans to which they must conform.

United Utilities Operational Structure

The Asset Management Division of United Utilities has responsibility for planning liaison via the LDF process and on planning applications. The team deal directly with Forward Planning and Development Management teams in all local authorities across the region. The Manager also attends the regular meetings of the Association of Greater Manchester Authorities (AGMA) which represents the 10 local authorities in Greater Manchester.

United Utilities liaise with a total of 63 local authorities. This more expansive number of local authorities reflects the fact that the operational boundaries for water treatment and management infrastructure are not necessarily consistent with local authority boundaries. Water treatment plants, located beyond what is considered the regional boundary, frequently service large areas of the north west and therefore have a significant influence on water services in the region.

The Highways Agency

The Highways Agency (HA) acts on behalf of the Secretary of State for Transport with local planning authorities, local highways / transport authorities, public transport providers and developers to ensure that national and regional transport policy aims and objectives are met. The role of the HA is defined as follows,

> " The efficient movement of people and goods on the strategic road network has a key part to play in supporting the economy. The Agency on behalf of the Secretary of State for Transport, is responsible for managing and operating a safe and efficient strategic road network in England. Amongst its activities, the Agency is responsible for considering the potential impact on the network of proposals for new developments" (DfT Circular 02/2007, para 4)

Department for Transport (DfT) have clearly set out the parameters for the interaction between HA, as a named consultee in the LDF process, and local planning authorities. Interaction is intended to be firmly anchored around partnership working; proactive engagement in the earliest stages of the LDF process; and dealing with planning applications (DfT Circular 02/2007, para 5). Policy documents express a firm commitment to responding positively and proactively towards involvement with LPAs from the pre production stages of all development plan documents in the interests of achieving sustainable and coherent proposals. The dangers associated with non intervention at an early stage in the LDF process are also clearly identified,

> " The Agency is a key delivery partner in achieving the outcomes
> set out in the [RSS] and LDF. Involving the Agency early in the
> process [RSS] and LDF process will improve the prospects of
> delivering realistic objectives and policies. The risk in not involving
> the Agency in developing policy frameworks is that, further down
> the line, specific planning proposals may emerge which the
> strategic road network is unable to support and may therefore be
> refused planning permission" (DfT Circular 02/2007, para 8)

HA policy undertakes to work towards the deliverability of local plans through the provision of advice and technical support for inclusion in local plans. The HA aims to assess the scale and location of proposals in relation to the strategic road network with regard to the practicability and affordability of proposals. A significant factor in policy guidance is the need to explore traffic management options to obviate the unconstrained traffic implications which could arise from new development (DfT Circular 02/2007, paras 27-33)

The Highways Agency Operational Structure

The Asset Development Team North West (ADTNW) has operational responsibility for liaising with local authorities for the Highways Agency. The entire team of 12 is based in Manchester, and subdivides the region into 4 patches; Greater Manchester & Warrington; Cheshire & Merseyside; Lancashire, and Cumbria. This section is based upon comments made in an interview with the leader of the Greater Manchester & Warrington team and on a lengthy group discussion which was attended by the entire ADTNW, including their senior manager. The team has been involved in planning liaison for over 10 years and therefore has considerable experience of changes and restructuring which has occurred in the planning system and within the HA over

that time. The ADTNW is part of the Network Delivery and Development (NDDD) Directorate. The NDD directorate has a strongly regionalised approach and was restructured to mirror other regional structures such as the former GONW.

This section shows that each of the three infrastructure provider agencies have a strong, in principle, commitment to engaging with the LDF process, which is clearly defined in their respective internal policy frameworks. This policy commitment to developing local plans and connecting with local planning authorities has also been translated by each agency into an operational framework which includes dedicated, large scale planning liaison teams in which several of the members of staff are themselves qualified planners.

Agenda

Previous academic studies have raised concerns about the capacity for collaboration between planners and stakeholders. These concerns are generally suggested to revolve around agenda mismatches between respective regulatory environments, and the content and timing of policies and investment strategies. An important objective for this study has been to raise these issues with practitioners in each agency in order to understand how these types of issues manifest themselves in practice, and to distill out what was said about their key concerns.

Regulatory Conformity

Respective regulatory frameworks have significant potential to be either contradictory or, in some instances, overtly in conflict. The extent to which this is a concern to provider agencies was confirmed at interview. The issue of regulatory conformity featured in discussions with all three of the agencies who took part in the study. The following example has been drawn from the discussions to illustrate the nature of the problems being expressed.

Both the Environment Agency and United Utilities are bound by the terms of the Water Framework Directive (WFD, 2000). The WFD is the most substantial piece of water legislation ever produced by the European Commission and it provides the major driver for achieving sustainable management of water across the whole of the EU. The legislation was adopted into UK law in 2003 and establishes a strategic framework for managing the water environment. This requires a management plan for each river basin to be developed every 6

years by the EA as the competent authority. There are clearly challenges for both EA and UU to reconcile the terms of the Directive with local plans.

Group discussions with EA and UU confirmed that there has so far been very limited discussion between water provider agencies and planners about the terms of important legislation. There is, apparently, " A lack of understanding of the practical issues involved in delivering infrastructure" (Senior Planner, Group Discussion, 15th March, p.5). This Senior Planner felt very strongly that many of the logistical circumstances surrounding effective planning for water infrastructure was not fully appreciated by most local authority planners, he commented that, " The average planner doesn't understand the obligations we have to work to" (Senior Planner, 10th May 2011)

It was further explained that UU is also concerned about the tensions between the planning process and the regulatory framework that water companies are legally obliged to meet in relation to timescales for connecting new developments to the water network.

> " The unfortunate position we are in is that, once planning permission is granted, there is a right to connect to the waste water network...whether there is infrastructure capacity available or not, there is a right to connect. There is a big underlying problem with the way the water system and the planning system interact... There is a right to connect, whether its 1000 properties or 1.. and thats with 21 days notice" (Planning Team Discussion, 10th May 2011)

The lack of understanding about conflicting regulatory frameworks meant that UU have to work to legally binding time scales to provide supporting waste water infrastructure; a factor which has been recognised as problematic in recent legal proceedings, but about which local authority planners in general appear to be completely unaware. In a recent legal judgement the ruling stated that more thought needs to be given to the interaction between the planning and the water regulation system (UK Supreme Court, 2009). In this context the senior planner for UU stated,

> " We don't want to prevent development but there needs to be greater attention to the practical issues about how to provide the water infrastructure. Connecting does take time, and there are practical issues with such limited notice" (Group Discussion 15th March p.3)

Commercial Pressures

There are clearly considerable commercial pressures for United Utilities which guide the content and timing of policies and investment strategies. UU staff fully understood the negative perceptions about the private sector, which could impact on their interactions with public sector planners,

> "We are seen as money making monopolies... I think that counts against us a lot of the time" (Group Discussion, 10th May, p.11).

However, discussions with staff at UU showed that their negotiations with planners are equally driven by a responsibility to achieve cost effectiveness for the customer, as reflected in this comment which was made by the Divisional Manager,

> " We have a core purpose which is about facilitating sustainable development... The development has to be cost beneficial..its customers who have to pay for these upgrades, and some areas just aren't cost beneficial to develop...If it was your own money you just wouldn't do it!" (Group Discussion, 15th March, p.3)

The senior planner for UU added, " We have to balance our investment decisions....our customers expect us to spend our money wisely" (Group Discussion, 15th March, p. 5). In achieving cost effectiveness, the priority for UU is to ensure firstly that existing infrastructure capacity is utilised to its maximum advantage, and secondly that where any new infrastructure development undertaken, it is based on a demonstrable need, and the highest possible level of certainty that development will actually be put on the ground.

UU staff describe an uneasy history of contact with local authority planners, especially where they are frequently just reacting to what they consider to be poorly informed and often ad hoc decisions made by local authorities,

> "If we were to build our infrastructure on the basis of local plans we would be massively oversizing assets and spending too much of the customers money" (Group Discussion 10th May p.11).

United Utilities expressed more general concerns, which they said are shared by water companies nationally, that Coalition reforms designed to promote development will have a seriously damaging effect on their ability to plan long term since the reforms are likely to result in an escalation in speculative development in desirable areas. UU have had input into the water company response to the NPPF (Water Company NPPF Consultation). At interview, UU planners cited specific local authorities in the region where they are already detecting these trends.

The tensions which inevitably arise as a result of the commercial considerations which influence UU, is succinctly demonstrated by the following comment,

> " Planners are looking at long timescales, planning ahead for housing and employment land sites, but sewerage are looking at a five year plan. Its a frustration for us and the planners....The planners say, we want to allocate these sites for employment and houses, but there isn't the infrastructure there, will you be able to provide it? And we say, we need certainty. The certainty is in the allocations but they say they want more certainty because who is to say with the economic situation there is going to be the demand for them and its just this continuous circle... I think it must be quite frustrating for the planners really." (Group Discussion, 10th May, p.1)

Capacity Pressures

Discussions with the Highways Agency showed that they were primarily concerned to manage capacity pressure on the entire motorway network. But to do so means they have to approach infrastructure planning on a much wider spatial scale than individual local authorities. The motorway network in the region has a limited amount of spare capacity and relatively small development proposals can have far reaching practical and cost implications.

> " I think the other thing is scale of improvement of the motorway network... with the all purpose trunk road network you can always tinker, tweek, update it do this do that.. you can't have half a lane on a motorway.. you have to have a full lane thats a couple of million pounds a kilometer... you cant just tweek a junction.. you go from one standard of junction to an upgrade that can cost tens of millions. Sometimes when you talk to planners and developers alike they cant understand the numbers.. they think we are out of scale for what they want to do.. " (Group Discussion, 10th July 2012, p. 6)

Quality safeguards are an important consideration for both local authority planners and external agencies in respect of the impacts of new development proposals on infrastructure provision for existing communities. Careful attention is needed to ensure that new development does not create undue pressure or lead to a reduction in the overall quality of existing services.

UU are also driven by a concern to manage capacity on a wider spatial scale

> " What you find is that local authorities don't speak to their neighbours. We have got to get the message across that its not just about their local authority. A treatment works serves a number of local authorities. So we try to develop a way that the solution fits all.. otherwise it becomes abortive.. We can't just put infrastructure in that suits one local authority" (Group Discussion, 10th May, p.9)

Problems have also resulted from the task of liaising with so many individual local authorities in the region who are all at widely differing stages in developing LDF documents,

> " Our experience is that some authorities are doing infrastructure planning in a lot of detail, some just doing a tick box exercise. Some authorities had issues because they could not find the relevant person to speak to in UU, or felt there wasn't much interest, others had the attitude that utility companies were just sat back waiting to be told by the planners. Some wouldn't try to promote a partnership approach...some local authorities had the attitude..there's the consultation comment if you want" (Group Discussion, 15th March, p.1)

There has, however, been no published research which has sought to understand the level of effort being put into collaborative working in the context of these pressures and constraints to effect greater synergies. The interviews and discussions with staff from the three infrastructure provider agencies were conducted to fill this knowledge gap by investigating what practical steps, if any, are being taken by these agencies to work collaboratively with local authority planners on infrastructure delivery. The following section of this chapter provides a comprehensive summary of the various ways in which these three crucial infrastructure providers are working to develop collaborative working with planners.

Infrastructure Planning Practices

Recent research studies have opened up debates about how local planning authorities interpret the evidence gathered, and whether such evidence is used to best effect in the plan making process (Lord & Hincks, 2010). This section explains three of the ways in which the three agencies involved in this study are striving to improve the quality of information provided to local authority planners. The approaches involve the EA information system called Geostore; a strategy UU have been developing based on capacity mapping; and technical modeling support which is provided by all three agencies.

Geostore

EA have developed a data system known as Geostore in order to ensure that the best quality data is made widely available. Geostore is a national database operated by EA to share information about flood risk zones, surface water flooding with local authorities. Access is made available through a password protected system to all local planning authorities. The EA planning liaison staff explained, however, that there are problems with the use of the system in terms of its general accessibility because much of the data is of a technical nature and is therefore likely to be better understood and utilitised by planners who are able to use and interpret GIS. EA are aware of these problems and try to ensure that the planning liaison teams interpret material where necessary.

Capacity Mapping

UU are in the process of developing a system of capacity mapping as a strategy to improve the quality of local infrastructure planning. UU staff explained that they have made several attempts over the past 18 months to inject more realism into the preparation of documents by consulting local planners across the region about the types of data they require. It was explained by UU staff that this initiative initially met with limited success.

> " Last year we trialled a system of asking them what information do you want and when do you want it. We couldn't get anything back to be honest. I guess to a certain degree they didn't know what we can give them, and they weren't sure what they wanted. Nobody knew what to ask" (Manager, Group Discussion,15th March, p.4)

UU are continuing with their internal strategies to improve the quality of their own data in order to develop a system of capacity mapping to assist in discussions with individual authorities, through what they describe as a traffic light system. In order to achieve this, UU gather information from all sources about each local authority and the stage reached with plan preparation,

> " We produce a schedule on a monthly basis about all LDF consultations by all 63 authorities, that is circulated. It shows specific dates when consultations have started, and gives us head up warning about what documents are coming. In addition we produce another documentary overview of the two key documents in the LDF, which are Site Allocations and Core Strategy. .. it tells us where they are up to.. Its an indicator when we need to get in there.. and gives us time to prepare" (Group Discussion, 15th March, p.4)

UU cross references this data with other information across a wide range of sources, including developers,

> " We layer up the information. We literally have maps built we can see where the land allocations are, where we have seen planning applications, where we have seen developer queries... we layer up the information and build up a picture of the likelihood of that development going ahead... its getting more certainty to make informed decisions and make sure the assets are there. (Group Discussion, 15th March, p. 5-6)

It is anticipated that capacity mapping will successfully show where the existing system has spare capacity and also provide an early warning system for areas where capacity is limited. Such a system can be used to give a clear understanding to each authority about the existing status of the supporting water infrastructure in relation to their development proposals, and assist with discussions about the timescales for development related to specific sites.

The new system which UU are working on was described by the Divisional Manager as follows,

> " Why would we want them (local authorities) to start drafting anything without us starting to feed information in there up front. We are setting up a system where there is a trigger point this authority is starting this now, and we will show where we are up to with the water network, water treatment etc with a narrative to try and influence.... saying you could develop straight away in these areas as all the infrastructure is in place to support growth, here it might take a bit more time... But to get that overall view to them about what the infrastructure is like up front before they adopt their document" (Divisional Manager, 15th March p. 4)

Technical Modeling

The interviews with all three of the provider agencies involved in the study showed that they are all involved in providing support to individual local authorities in relation to technical modeling. EA staff explained that they have adopted a strategy of assisting local authorities with essential flood risk modeling exercises, which local authorities would otherwise not have been able to undertake due to the lack of technical expertise or funding. EA staff cited several recent examples of how this had worked in practice with specific local authorities in Lancashire. Where the EA has relevant information there is an increasing tendency for them to support the local authority by supplying existing data and assisting with its interpretation.

UU also take part in collaborative technical modeling exercises in order to ensure that the feasibility of site proposals by local authorities has been fully examined and that any additional water resources are anticipated well advance. The Divisional Manager commented,

> " It takes a long time to build a waste water treatment works. We have a huge issue, when is the time right to start digging holes... its a huge challenge!" (Group Discussion 15th March p.2)

Working jointly on modeling for particular sites is a time consuming and costly exercise in itself, and is therefore something which needs to be used in a well managed and targeted way. Several times over the course of the discussions concerns were expressed that UU was being expected to do a lot of costly and time consuming preparatory work to feed into plans and proposals that were

often aspirational, speculative, and might never happen (UU Group Discussion, 10th May p.8).

A failure to hold early discussions about the need for a modeling exercise for a specific site places considerable pressures on a number of teams at UU, and is not something which can be undertaken quickly by the technical modeling team, " It puts pressure on the modeling team, and puts them under pressure... what resources do we need for this team or that team.. We cant predict it" (15th March, p.5) The Senior Technical team member explained in another group discussion,

> " Just to give you an idea.. to run one development scenario on a sewer model on a high spec pd takes 3 to 4 days... So if you imagine lots of different development proposals and you are not sure which one is going to happen... how on earth do you assess that" (Group Discussion, 10th May p. p.8)

Planning Liaison Teams

The planning liaison team within EA are a regular point of face to face contact with all local authorities on a patch by patch basis across the north west, and they place great emphasis on the importance of maintaining and developing this type of interaction.

> " ... I think it has been an advantage to us.. some of the other statutory consultees have changed their structures and they don't have the face to face contact any more... [name] deals with certain authorities and they all know [name] whereas other bodies are distant.. yes they might be able to phone someone up, but its a service centre and they don't know who they are speaking to and you can't build up that reputation for being trustworthy and reasonable if you don't meet them ... or they have no

experience of you as an individual" (EA Group Discussion 10th July, p.7)

Team members explained the steps they take to ensure that they are engaging with local authorities face to face

> " That's what we try to do, don't we? We try to get that information in advance and go with that (all agree) Maybe its an issue of we have to take someone from FCRM along as well, to give the impression that we have brought the right person along for the job. We don't mind taking that information on their behalf, but thats what we try to do.. we go to speak to them upstairs and get the information .. its not always easy to get that information out of them but I have got it out of them before! .. We are viewed as important by the planners but other teams don't really recognise that. (Group Discussion, p.2)

In order to improve their interface with a larger number of local authorities, UU are increasing the number of staff working as LDF coordinators. The decision to increase the size of the team dealing with face to face liaison with planning teams has become apparent in the past 18 months in response to an increasing demand for contact,

> "Local authority consultations... we just tried to squeeze them in.... sometimes we responded and sometimes we didn't" (Divisional Manager, 10th May, p. 4).

It was further explained that increasing the size of the liaison team gives UU parity with private water companies in other areas of the country. The current LDF Coordinator has been an active participant in the discussion groups which have taken place as part of this study; he has also been interviewed separately.

The Highways Agency has a long established planning liaison team known as ADTNW. In group discussions for this study team members expressed concerns that recent restructuring is likely to divert their attention from what has been their key task of liaising directly with local authority planners. It was explained that, traditionally, the ADT was entirely focussed on developing the long term strategy for the motorway network, such as examining the regional impact of major road development projects. Recently, changes to the role and responsibilities of the ADT mean that the group are now involved in more immediate, smaller scale minor improvements through the development of a 4 year programme minor improvement plan. In addition the ADT also explained that in the past 6 months there have been significant changes in their role which have reduced the proportion of their time which is now dedicated to strategic planning overall which was explained as follows,

> "We've had a lot of change, we've taken on a lot of the asset development side. So the strategic planning bit is only now about 50% of our work. It used to be 100%. When it was strategic planning, we used to have two teams, an LDF and a DC team with 2 people in each. (We dealt with) probably 75% planning applications and 25% spatial planning. Now all of that is condensed into 50% because now we have to deal with things such as lamp posts leaning over, all that kind of nonsense, which is not really strategic. We are also dealing with enquiries from the public... thats what its been like for the past 6 months. So in terms of engagement with local authorities on their forward plans, it has had to fall off the table which I didn't want to do because I am more interested in that.. I can speak for the whole of the NW team. We have all sat down here and said that things are going to fall off the table.... taking on the asset development side takes our eyes

off strategic planning quite a bit" (HA Group Discussion, 11/6/2012 p.12)

Recent restructuring is likely to restrict ADT liaison about local plans and instead focus activity on dealing within individual planning applications. ADT is monitored on their performance on all aspects of planning liaison, but particular emphasis is placed on the processing of planning applications with strict 28 day response times, the comment was made that,

> " We don't want planners and CLG to accuse us of slowing the planning system down" (HA Group Discussion, 11/6/2012, p.3)

In response to the additional pressures exerted on the ADT as a result of their recently broadened remit, there was a sense in the group discussion that the consequence would be that they would have to concentrate on asset management and planning applications which would mean that attention would necessarily be limited with regards to future consultation with local authorities on their LDF documents. Nevertheless, ADT members recognised that this was likely to be, "Storing up trouble for the future" (HA Group Discussion, 11/6/2012 .p. 12)

Targeting Priority Local Authorities

To complement their strategy of promoting a more direct interface with local authorities, EA also adopt a policy of targeting high priority areas.

> " We have prioritised some local authorities internally to identify the biggest opportunities and risks in terms of development and the environment and we go out proactively to those authorities to make sure that they know what's on Geostore for example, and to make sure that they know us as individuals. Other authorities lower down that list might get a meeting say once a year, rather than once a quarter, but they still get contact"
> (Team Leader Interview 7/6/12, p. 3)

The EA is recognising the advantages, which can be derived for the agency, of early and targeted dialogue. Working in partnership with local authorities to identify the feasibility of higher risk sites means that there is greater clarity: some sites can be jettisoned where there is agreement about their unsuitability due to flood risk, or the risks associated can be made known to potential developers well in advance of any planning applications. It was explained that early decision making means that, " EA don't have to deal with them further down the line" (Team Leader Interview, p.2)

Involvement in Writing DPDs

Examples were quoted where the EA have worked co operatively with local authorities to write supplementary planning documents as a joint effort. The mutual benefits of working in partnership being that the local authority secures a well evidenced document which can be incorporated into their local development framework, and EA gets a step further in achieving their corporate aims and objectives for the area.

EA staff cited recent examples to describe how they have worked with particular local authorities on reframing Area Action Plans. In the redevelopment plans related to Local Authority A's town centre regeneration plans, an AAP which had been written by consultants did not include a strategic flood risk assessment. EA had raised some concerns at an early stage in the plan preparation, but these concerns had not been fully acknowledged or discussed. As a result, EA intervened forcefully by challenging the soundness of the plan, but this was inevitably very late in the day. In recognising the importance of the AAP proposals for the economic well being of the town, the EA took the decision to work more cooperatively with the local authority to ensure the flood risk problems were throughly investigated and resolved, to ensure the plan as a whole was delivered.

> "... When the consultants were off the scene and the planners had taken it back on, we sat down with them, we tried to find a way forward, we had a lot of technical expertise in house and they had a very good but small planning team. Fortunately we had good modeling data for that area... we knew they could not afford to get external help. We ended up with a good plan but we could have done that six months before hand... they ended up with a good plan... but it really emphasised that we could have done that six months before" (Team Leader Interview, p.3)

In reflecting on this situation, the team leader commented, " I think there should be criticism about our approach because it had all gone too far and got quite late in the day" (Team Leader Interview, p.3)

Discussions with the LDF Co ordinator at UU also revealed instances where he had become increasingly involved in co-writing development plan documents with particular local authorities, and the circumstances under which this sort of action becomes necessary,

> "We've got one at the moment where they produced this document and they said what do you think of it... we had had meetings with them in the past.. all the facts were correct.. but it was just one paragraph.. full of facts that didn't relate to each other .. so I said.. tell us what you want to say.. tell us what you want your audience to hear and I will write it for you... so thats what we have done" (LDF Coordinator, 10th May p.5)

The Highways Agency also described situations where they have worked directly with individual local authorities to write development plan documents but, of the three agencies consulted during this study, they offer the least direct support and do so rather reluctantly. The main thrust of discussions with ADT showed that they tended to focus on critiquing LDF documents and the quality of the local authority work which had gone into them, rather than displaying any general or widespread willingness to work collaboratively in their preparation.

> "Local authority A fired across their transport topic paper but their first draft wasn't great. It said there were no capacity problems on motorway A... but it's stuffed, absolutely stuffed... so thats what we were up against. We have to make sure that our network performance is reflected as accurately as possible in their transport topic papers or wherever it manifests itself in their local plan. We try and do as much as possible .. I think for Local authority B, we wrote half of it for them... that's

something we didn't want to do, but there was something important that needed to be said" (11/6. p.6)

The ADT has taken a more objective view in the earlier stages of the development of CS documents,

" Many a time we have sat round the table and they've said right are you happy with our CS... and we have had to say, well no... because you have not explained what are the implications for our network.. you've not shown us that... we have to go a lot further.. we can't just tick a box and say fantastic" (Group Discussion, 10th July, p. 5)

The more detached approach adopted by the ADT has led them to become more obstructive and adversarial in the advanced stages in the planning consultation process.

" What we really want is to have all the infrastructure requirements to make this plan a reality by the site allocations document, not the CS because its too woolly. So it was a bit of a light touch at CS stage but we came down with a bit of a stick at site allocations stage.." (11/6/2012 p.6)

" The ultimate catch all for us is we still have powers of direction at site allocations stage. So we have documentation to say we asked you for infrastructure here at CS.. you didn't give it to us, therefore we were right and legitimate to say we are holding up the planning application until its sorted" (11/06/2012, p.6)

" Engagement is just box ticking.. some say right we've asked the agency... we get them to reference the concordat... that's the first line of defence. At least have

the wording in the CS so the inspector knows what we have agreed" (11/06/2012, p.8)

Improving Internal Communication

There is evidence to suggest that greater attention is being paid to improving organisational and policy integration as a means of improving collaborative working with local authority planners. During the group session with EA there was considerable discussion about the lack of coordination which exists between themselves, as the key outward facing team for EA, and other teams within the organisation, particularly those responsible for producing technical information. Participants in the group discussion were in agreement that they struggled to get other colleagues in EA to understand the impact of EA decisions on individual boroughs in the area. This viewpoint is captured in the following short extract from the discussion concerning the role of internal teams such as Environment Management and Water Resources,

> "FCRM obviously know what they are doing, but do they realise the weight that carries with planning authorities.... I think sometimes we struggle to get [other members of EA] to engage.. obviously in this room we are all concerned about planning because we are dealing with long term plans... but other teams don't necessarily.. if we put an LDF document or local plan in front of them... Its not their priority!.. Its very low priority! " (Group Discussion, 10th July 2012, p.2)

The planning liaison team discussed in some detail the challenges involved in making sure they were taking the right information out to their meetings with local authorities. The team leader opened the questions around these issues, by posing this question to the rest of the group.

> " I wonder sometimes.. do we bring the right information to the table? As planners in this organisation do we know where FCRM are building the next flood defences, do we have our finger on that information and are we bringing that to the table? .. can we go to a meeting with a local authority and say this is our list of potential flood defences in our area? (Group Discussion, p.2)

It was also explained during the discussion that EA now try to improve internal communication through the use of Local Authority Packs which are circulated to all EA internal teams to ensure that key issues for each local authority in the region are clearly explained and understood by all teams. An example was cited that related to another Lancashire authority (Local Authority B),

> "I think Local Authority B is a classic example of that... how long did you have to, as one individual, have to keep making comments about Local Authority B... and you weren't getting any support from the Environment Management Team and Bathing Water Team.... that's not how it should be.. they should have thought right this issue is absolutely crucial for the EA and it's clearly an important issue for Local Authority B. (Group Discussion, 10th July 2012, p.3)

It was also commented in discussions with EA that communication between senior managers at EA, and senior members of local authorities and politicians, can set the tone for effective overall communication and avoid difficulties.

> " It can make a big difference for us in terms of trying to influence plans where there hasn't been higher level engagement.. maybe our area manager might not be on the best terms with their chief executive and then we get the brunt of that..because you know for a start that they might have a slightly negative opinion of the EA, or they think we are going to push our issues rather than work with them" (Group Discussion, p.5)

The group also explained the detrimental impact of a past history involving adversarial negotiations, which had allowed antagonistic relationships to develop at a senior management level, and that they were trying to deal with these sorts of issues in their face to face discussions.

> " I used to work in a different region and we ended up in a position where the local authority challenged one of our plans, and they took it to judicial review, so it was serious and it was very much a problem at a high level, so this very antagonistic relationship had built up. By the time it got to us there was absolutely nothing we could do.. we could go along and be as helpful as we liked but there was nothing we could do.. it made no difference" (Group Discussion, p.5)

Strengthening Inter Agency Working

The EA is also now adopting a more collaborative approach with a much wider group of interconnected agencies including water companies.

The development of greater collaboration between EA and other agencies demands a cultural shift from a strictly regulatory type of role, towards a more hybrid regulatory/partnership arrangement with other organisations. EA appears to be embracing the challenges associated with reconciling the potential conflicts between these functions, but there is an admission that EA is, "not traditionally used to it".

The importance of working in partnership was raised by both EA and UU, and is described as necessary for the following reasons,

> " Some feedback from the local authorities was that we would respond in conflict with EA and then the planners would have to spend their time going back and forth between us trying to work it out. So now the EA planners are mapped onto my planners...so they have a contact to ring if they need to" (UU Lead Officer EA Liaison, 10th May, p.3)

The ways in which EA and UU are striving to improve joint co operation has been explained as follows,

> " We work quite closely with EA... we have had several meetings recently trying to promote this joint working.. initially with the day to day planning responses, but then picking up the LDF process. Because they are responding to the LDF just the same as we are. It would be fantastic if we could get to a point where we support each others submissions because at the end of the day UU and EA are trying to do the same thing" (Group Discussion 10th May, p.6)

The EA interviews and group discussion reflected both the co operation and the tensions in the relationship with United Utilities. EA staff expressed concerns related to the quality of internal technical knowledge base within UU. " One of the things we all find frustrating about UU is that they don't know their own systems well enough" (Group Discussion, p.2) EA and UU are now actively involved in working together to make the necessary improvements. There were also problems related to particular individuals, but EA are not in a position to deal with this issue.

> " There are some very good people at UU and they are getting much more proactive in terms of outward facing... but there is one personality.. we get a lot of negative feedback about them. Local planners come to us and expect us to be able to sort it out and we don't have any power over UU's hiring and firing policies so errr... (Group Discussion, p.1)

The EA team felt that UU were not taking the commercial view that water companies in other parts of the country were adopting,

> " When I have spoken to other planning folk who deal with other companies.. some of them have seen it as an opportunity, so if there is going to be another site allocated.. they see this as an opportunity.. to potentially get more customers" (Group Discussion p.1)

Working with the Wider Local Authority Network

Striving to seek alternative solutions to further infrastructure expansion has also led ADT to strengthen their interagency working. ADT are developing stronger links with other transport infrastructure provider groups such as Transport for Greater Manchester (TFGM) and further integrated transport initiatives are anticipated through regular liaison with AGMA. The aim of the Highways Agency is to seek out alternatives through increased use of public bus and metrolink services.

In terms of the experience of interaction between ADT and local authority planners, there have clearly been difficulties in identifying the right contact points through which to establish and develop a more constructive interface.

> " Its always been difficult from our point of view, we always get criticised by the local authorities, they would say who do we go to for planning in the Highways Agency, thats now changed through our reorganisation, but the other problem from my point of view was who do I go to within the local authority to talk about strategic transport?"(11/6/2012, p.4)

Working With Developers

UU has recognised that they need to develop stronger working relationships with developers. There is a firm belief that working with the big developers and house builders such as Taylor Wimpey, Barratts, and Peel Holdings will improve intelligence which can be fed into the plan making process, giving better direction and more certainty about specific sites and proposals. In the group discussions, it was accepted that, historically, UU has not worked effectively

with developers and there are clearly issues about the limited trust which emerged in the conversations,

> " There is a massive disconnect between ourselves and the developers because they don't really understand our issues and we don't understand theirs... the house builders.. they don't really think a lot of us at all" (Group Discussion, 10th May p.9)

The Highways Agency staff also stated that they are becoming increasingly more concerned to strengthen partnerships with developers. ADT staff explained that developers included anyone who comes forward with a major application which has implications for the network. Usually these developers have large land holdings; this includes Peel Holdings, and, on a national level, British Coal and British Land.

> " We are starting to put together a questionnaire now for developers asking how they felt we performed.. could we do anything better etc.. and there is talk also that DCLG might want us to send it out to planners as well... its related to the statutory process of planning applications but we might roll it out to the wider forward planning field" (Group Discussion, 10th July, p.1)

> "Its important that you know that the agency is now aware and recognises the challenges... internally we have put together a questionnaire with 8 developers.. that has been taken to a certain stage.. and an instruction has just been given that a similar questionnaire has to be developed for planners as well.. " (Senior Manager, Group Discussion 10th July p.10)

Engagement

The interviews and group sessions with each of the three infrastructure provider agencies was an opportunity to listen to the ways in which staff in each agency discussed their experiences of working with local authority planners. This section reflects the general impressions this dialogue created over many hours of discussion, about the prevailing culture in each of the three organisations. In addition, the individuals who took part in the interviews and discussion were given a summary of the comments planners had made in the survey about their views on engagement. Each of the agencies was given a selection of the general comments planners made about engagement, and a selection of the specific comments on engagement about their particular form of infrastructure. The following reflects the responses and reactions of the staff in each agency.

The Environment Agency & Attitudes towards Engagement

There is a strong overall sense from the interviews which have taken place with all the Penrith team members that, although they have a regulatory role in the planning process, their overriding aim is to adopt an "enabling" approach in their dealings with local authority planners. This approach was succinctly described in an interview with the North Area Team Leader,

> " In the past EA might have been a little bit more bullish in terms of objecting. Now we take a yes if approach which has been rolled out across the business. Its not our role to stand in the way of things happening if its safe and it doesn't cause damage. It might be that a site could flood to a few millimetres every couple of years, but if that could mean delivering an important commercial venture for the town that's otherwise going down the pan, then yes its got to be balanced out. " (EA Team Leader Interview, 7/6/2012, p.4)

In reflecting on her 10 years experience of working for EA, the Team Leader (who is also a qualified town planner) explained how the overriding approach of EA has changed,

" Previously we would be objecting to things and holding that position and it did feel quite adversarial. Now the internal emphasis is much different, its about providing information to local authorities in a timely and sensible way so that they can make decisions.... It has come down to us very clearly from DEFRA and the Coalition that we cannot be a blocker, we need to be enabling " (EA Team Leader Interview, 7/6/2012, p.4)

All the EA team members who participated in this study cooperated fully with the suggestion that they should reflect on their own experiences, and they all exchanged their comments freely during the group discussions. All the staff who participated made a great effort to join in with the exercise and, as a result, conveyed the sense that they were conscientiously working to improve their working relationship with local authorities in their day to day roles.

United Utilities & Attitudes towards Engagement

Throughout many hours of discussion, staff at UU showed great enthusiasm and commitment to working co operatively with local authority planning staff, and striving to achieve a better rapport. Currently managers are continuing to work with the Association of Greater Manchester Authorities (AGMA), and they are enthusiastic about their involvement in strategic development through AGMA. LDF coordinators have made considerable progress in connecting with some local authorities on a one to one basis and consider they have gained trust by doing so. UU staff are intent on trying to develop similar working relationships with a larger number of authorities in the region. It is clear that

various efforts and initiatives which UU staff have tried in the recent past to communicate with local authorities has not produced an entirely positive response. This has been met with some disappointment, but there is a prevailing determination to continue to try to engage through the development of alternative strategies. There is a sense of persistence about the attitude of staff at UU, particularly the Asset Development Managers. UU is also actively working with key developers in the north west to achieve a better understanding about their commercial strategies. There is also a sense that UU intends to become more directive in the way they interact with individual authorities on the back of the development of stronger links with developers.

The Highways Agency & Attitudes towards Engagement

Several hours of discussion with the ADT members created the impression that there is a strong sense of camaraderie between them. Their reflections and recall of policy and events conveyed that they all had considerable experience of working in their current role. There is, however, a discernible level of suspicion in the attitude of ADT members towards local authority planners. ADT staff speak fairly critically of local planners, and about their negative experiences of working with them,

> " I don't think the planners really bought into the concordat.." (11/6 p.9)

In the group discussion, experiences of working with local plans gave rise to comments across the board which were variously alluded to as, "woolly", "vague", "some long, some short" and "nebulous" (10th July 2012, p.2)

> " We have traditionally taken a regional overview, so our involvement with the planners when the CS was being discussed and consulted on... we would go and see the planners, make a point of going to see the planners and say what are you doing about the issues on our network, and they would say well what are your issues on the network" (11/6, p.5)

ADT members also explained that they had detected a sense that consultation with the Highways Agency was frequently regarded as a secondary issue with other infrastructure providers considered to be higher priority,

> "... they tended to concentrate a lot more with the utility providers like electric and gas... obviously without those you couldn't have your development or your housing... they were looking at that at the beginning and perhaps thinking of the transport as something that came afterwards" (Group Discussion, 10th July 2012, p. 7)

When the ADT members were asked about the level of suspicion which had been conveyed in the planners' survey comments, they seemed unsurprised. The following comment captured the view of the ADT group ".... {this} is quite familiar to us...we have had that a few times!" (10th July, 2012, p.4)

<u>Conclusions</u>

This chapter has discussed the approach and attitudes of the Environment Agency, United Utilities plc and the Highways Agency towards infrastructure delivery as part of the local plan making process. This component of the study has been necessary to provide a more complete insight into the collaborative capacity between local planners and infrastructure stakeholders. The national survey concluded that planners harbour some concerns about the level of interest and commitment amongst external stakeholder agencies towards working to develop and deliver local development plans; this chapter has considered whether these concerns are justified.

The evidence gathered through face to face dialogue with key 3 stakeholders in the North West shows that there is much to reassure planners. EA, HA and UU have long established and dedicated planning liaison teams. All the people employed in these teams have been interviewed as part of this study, and have described a lengthy history of engaging with planners in the plan making process. Furthermore, despite some negative responses from planners on occasion, each of the three agencies have detailed internal strategies in place through which they hope to achieve more effective engagement for the future.

The practical ways in which the commitment of the three agencies is being shown has been explained in detail in this chapter. In summary, these measures involve:

• Improving the quality of information to support decision making

• Financing technical modeling where it is clear that the local authority has limited resources

• Providing a direct interface between the stakeholder organisation and local authority planners across the region

• Supporting planners in writing development plans

• Working to resolve conflicts between local authorities over infrastructure issues

• Extending the level of cooperation corporately by ensuring that other internal colleagues are attentive and supportive towards the local plan making process

• Developing better intelligence across the wider network of organisations to promote a more integrated approach to infrastructure delivery.

The research with the provider agencies does, however, show that there are certain fracture points, which cause problems and need to be considered more carefully. Provider agencies have expressed some frustration that local planners do not appreciate the constraints and pressures which can result from the mismatches between the respective regulatory frameworks. The planning liaison function within the infrastructure provider agencies is, in some cases, being cut back and the remit of the liaison staff extended beyond planning, as a result of organisational restructuring. These problems are exacerbated by some clear differences in the prevailing culture which sets the Highways Agency, in particular, apart from the Environment Agency and United Utilities in terms of their attitudes towards local planners.

As activity on local plans and infrastructure delivery strategies continues to intensify up to 2016 and beyond it is important that the positive steps being taken by all three provider agencies towards improving collaboration with planners are more widely understood and utilised by local authority planners in the region. The fracture points which have emerged through this study also need to be more openly discussed and resolved. All these issues are considered in the concluding chapter, where comparisons are made between what emerged from both the planner survey (chapter 6) and the stakeholder conversations which formed the basis of this chapter.

CHAPTER 8

INFRASTRUCTURE PLANNING PRACTICE
IN THE ENGLISH LOCAL PLANNING SYSTEM

Introduction

This study has investigated infrastructure planning practices in the English local planning system in the period between 1997-2013 by peering into the operational realities in local infrastructure planning across England. Infrastructure planning is constantly promoted internationally and domestically as a mechanism for stimulating economic growth and recovery, and environmental sustainability (Baker & Schwartz, 2013; HM Treasury, 2012; LGA, 2012). Such claims have attracted academic researchers to consider the political, economic and environmental implications associated with high profile mega infrastructure projects and nationally significant infrastructure planning concerns. This emphasis upon nationally significant infrastructure planning has, however, left an unexplored gap in observing the way that the local planning system deals with infrastructure issues. This study has therefore investigated how practitioners engage with infrastructure delivery within the local planning system in England. This research, and the reflections on it in this chapter, have been inspired by various strands of academic thinking; for example Graham & Thrift (2007) in which the underlying philosophy is that aspects of the infrastructure debate which have traditionally been considered minor/ everyday must not be overlooked by researchers; and Peck's (2012) stark depiction of public sector, non profit and business sectors struggling to deal, collaboratively, with the impact of austerity urbanism in the United States.

The research has investigated local practice across all English regions to understand the wider national picture for local planning practice, and has complemented this by drilling down into operational practices amongst key stakeholders in the north west. The north west has been selected for more in depth investigation in this study because it is one of the regions suffering most acutely from economic stagnation, Coalition public sector spending cuts and the enormous challenges associated with attracting infrastructure investment compared to the more economically buoyant south (Tyler, 2013). There are now growing concerns (Leslie, 2013) about the lack of tangible progress with the delivery of major infrastructure arising from the Coalition government's continuing strategy for economic recovery (Alexander, 2013). At the same time, the academic community is expressing disquiet about the constraints being imposed, through the most recent reforms, upon the planning profession and the challenges these present not just for high quality sustainable development, but democracy itself (Haughton & Hincks, 2013). There has arguably never been a more important time to have investigated local infrastructure planning practice to assess the potential which exists amongst local practitioners to play an effective part in overcoming the persistent development paralysis affecting the country.

This chapter addresses the fourth, and final, objective of the study, as set out in chapter 5. Objective four has two interlinked stages. The first stage draws together the key findings of the study, whilst the second stage discusses the wider policy implications which emerge from the research. The latter part of this chapter focusses on the key concluding reflections, discusses the research experience and proposes opportunities for further research in the light of the findings made in the study.

In this chapter, based on the national survey (chapter 6), it is argued that local authority planners across England are already adopting an integrated approach to infrastructure planning; nurturing the necessary skills to take on the challenges which have been presented by the revocation of strategic planning at the regional level: and promoting a positive outlook necessary for the strategic planning of infrastructure. These findings are further endorsed through the closer examination of the north west region (chapter 7). The evidence from the north west region shows that key infrastructure stakeholders are working cooperatively with individual local planning authorities on a one to one basis in the absence of a regional strategic framework. Overall, the findings of the research provide evidence that local practitioners in the public, non profit and business sectors are becoming increasingly adept at identifying local and regional infrastructure needs, co-operating on an inter sectoral basis, and ensuring that existing resources are utilised to best effect in their day to day practice. The ways in which these researching findings connect with the national infrastructure planning strategy proposed by the Coalition government, and the consequences for regions identified as suffering most acutely from

economic malaise (Tyler, 2013), are explored in detail in the policy implications section and final stages of this chapter.

Local Infrastructure Planning in England: Key Research Findings

The overall research aim was to determine whether local planners and infrastructure stakeholders achieve cooperation, coordination and policy coherence in addressing infrastructure in day to day practice within the English local planning system. To achieve the research aim, four objectives were set. Objective 1 was to examine the context for infrastructure planning at the local level and the influences which have shaped infrastructure planning within the local planning system over the past 16 years; Objectives 2 & 3 were to provide a snapshot of how infrastructure planning currently operates within the local planning system; finally, objective 4 was to establish what lessons can be learned from the study to promote greater synergy between national and local planning of infrastructure.

Chapters 2 & 3 have addressed Objective 1 by explaining the confused, complex and contradictory planning and economic policy environment within which practicing local planners and all organisations involved in infrastructure planning have been working over the past 16 years. New Labour planning policy between 1997 and 2010 promoted a pivotal role for local authority planners within the public sector on infrastructure planning. Local government was encouraged to work in partnership with all sectors to ensure that infrastructure funding mechanisms were coordinated across sectors and that there was effective dialogue about infrastructure needs and requirements. The importance of extensive consultation and collaboration within local authorities

and across stakeholders in all sectors was strongly communicated and reinforced in the detailed and, some argued (Gunn & Hillier, 2012), overly prescriptive training provided by the government (via PAS) and through a host of other consultancies at the time. The economic crisis in 2008, and the election of the Coalition government in May 2010, has resulted in radical cuts in public sector spending and on reducing the size of the public sector (see chapter 3). Local planning has been portrayed as one of the key inhibitors of economic growth; held up as an exemplar of the damaging effects of bureaucratisation by politicians and the media. Coalition infrastructure planning policies have largely bypassed local planning, preferring instead to promote community decision making through neighbourhood planning; to give business greater powers through Local Enterprise Partnerships; and to return major infrastructure planning decisions to ministers and central government. All these initiatives have been proposed ostensibly to speed up decision making on infrastructure projects and boost economic growth.

In the context of the wave of new reforms, understanding how planners and stakeholders undertake infrastructure planning in local practice has largely slipped under the radar of planning research. The research agenda for local planning has so far focused on the higher profile policy announcements since May 2010 connected to community empowerment and neighbourhood plans. It can be argued that infrastructure planning, in the context of local planning, has always been treated as comparatively less significant or interesting because of the dominance of major infrastructure schemes in policy and political discussions. The absence of any direct reference by the Coalition government to 'spatial' planning, and the attempt to distance the Localist inspired planning

reforms from any association with New Labour planning policy, has also contributed to the current lack of interest in how local practitioners plan for infrastructure. For all these reasons, therefore, academics have been more intently concerned with studying the processes and impacts of infrastructure planning at the national scale. The literature review (Chapter 2) also shows that planning academics are only now beginning to consider the evolution of English spatial planning; the possible legacy of New Labour planning reform; and how all this might be brought together in a reconfigured form of integrated planning. As the literature review shows, the direction of international and domestic academic thinking continues to focus on promoting a role for planning practice based on the importance of cooperation, coordination and policy coherence.

The general conclusion which can be drawn from the literature, and associated policy review (chapter 3) is that little is actually known about the ways in which the political rhetoric, conflicting policy agendas for planning, and confused experimental approaches to public policy implementation have impacted on local planners and the organisations involved in planning for infrastructure in their day to day practices.

The empirical chapters of the study (Chapters 6 & 7) address objectives 2 & 3. Chapter 6 reports on the outcomes of investigations with local authority planners involved in infrastructure planning, concluded through a national survey. Chapter 7 documents the experiences of stakeholder agencies and their engagement in infrastructure delivery issues in daily practice via the local planning system. Chapter 7 explores the collaborative capacity between local authority planners and infrastructure providers in the North West region to

determine whether engagement is being fostered and to establish how this occurs in day to day practice. Consulting directly with planners on a national basis, and widely with a targeted group of infrastructure stakeholders, is essential to unravel the confused and uncertain picture which has been explained in Chapters 2 & 3. The findings which arise from Chapters 6 & 7 are now synthesised and presented using the 3 criteria which have formed the conceptual framework to this study. *Network* has sought to examine the organisational integration which exists for infrastructure planning; *Agenda* explored policy integration; and *Engagement* considered the attitudes amongst the practitioners towards collaboration on infrastructure planning.

Network

The first stage of the conceptual framework examined the interconnections between organisations with an involvement in infrastructure planning within the local planning system. In particular this component of the conceptual framework examined whether local planners operate in collaboration with a network of other infrastructure stakeholders. Establishing whether planners have established the necessary intra and inter sectoral organisational connections is fundamental to understanding their ability to operate strategically to deliver infrastructure requirements as part of the LDF process. The evidence collected from the national survey, conducted as the first stage of the empirical work for this study, confirms that planners across the country are consulting and communicating widely with an extensive network of stakeholder organisations about infrastructure, within their own local authority; on an inter authority basis; and also across the private and voluntary sectors. This is a key finding of this study and acts as further corroborative evidence about the level of interest and

involvement local planners have in infrastructure planning across all regions of England. Clearly, in the current economic climate, there are a range of drivers which are motivating closer cooperation within and between sectors, and these are explored and discussed in the policy implications section of this chapter.

Working on infrastructure planning strategies with stakeholders is not confined to one or two regions of the country where there is a high level of development pressures and opportunities. Indeed, there is considerable interest and involvement in infrastructure planning amongst local authority planners across the North of England where the challenge of competing for infrastructure investment in these regions is far greater than in the economically more buoyant south.

This study has discovered that local planners believe that they are improving their communication with other local authority colleagues, both in the corporate body and with other departments on the development of Infrastructure Delivery Plans (IDPs) and strategies. The survey responses showed that a significant proportion of planners declared themselves to be working proactively within the wider authority framework and the majority of the 97 survey respondents who answered the question have confidence in the support of the chief executive, senior politicians, and corporate management team. 153 of the respondents also stated that they had strengthened their joint working on policy formulation with colleagues in other departments such as education. The findings from this study mirror the findings of other recent research (Hincks & Baker, 2013) which has evaluated local planners and their potential for strategic involvement in functionally based housing market areas. This earlier study also found that

planners were increasingly working with housing and economic development officers. The empirical work undertaken in the current research has placed similar emphasis on investigating whether local planners have established the necessary stakeholder connections to be able to plan more strategically for infrastructure and has also reached the conclusion that local planners are generally well connected to the wider local authority framework.

Overall, there is clearly a national trend towards improving intra departmental collaboration amongst local planners. It would, however, be naive to assume on the basis of this survey and other recent research that there are no residual problems in striving to achieve a degree of intra departmental cooperation, particularly in the context of the severe public sector rationalisation which has been implemented by the Coalition government. Some of the planners who took part in the survey expressed concerns about the marginalisation of planning teams within the authority. They felt that they were viewed with suspicion by corporate colleagues and fractures within planning teams between Forward Planning and Development Management were also revealed. There is clearly, therefore, progress yet to be made in many local authorities.

The infrastructure planning organisational network, as defined in the conceptual framework, also facilitated a closer examination of inter authority or cross boundary co operation. Understanding whether planners work proactively with other authorities is the single most fundamental test of their ability and capacity to act strategically. It has been well established in previous research that functional areas do not respect administrative boundaries (Hincks, 2010; Wong et al, 2012a&b). The dangers associated with a narrowly framed, introspective

and self serving approach within individual local authorities is a scenario which has been the subject of much academic discussion. It is suggested that autonomous decision making can result in friction and turf wars between authorities (Hincks 2010; Hincks & Baker, 2013). Recent research has, however, concluded that there were signs that local planning authorities were beginning to work together more strategically in relation to housing issues through improved understanding of the use of functional areas (Hincks & Baker, 2013). A key finding of this study, based on the national survey response, is that such inter authority collaboration for the purpose of the coordination of infrastructure planning is taking place across large numbers of local authorities.

The survey responses provide specific evidence that cross boundary working is already taking place across wide areas of the country. Over half of the 152 respondents who answered the question confirmed that their local planning authority was connecting with neighbouring authorities (see Chapter 6). Written comments from planners in the survey provide corroborative evidence about the actual nature of that collaborative working for several regions including the East Midlands; East of England; South East; South West; and the West Midlands. The stated advantages are that working jointly strengthened the ability to liaise with infrastructure stakeholder organisations; it improved information sharing; facilitated inter authority consistency; assisted with CIL strategies; and promoted joint production of Core Strategies and Infrastructure Delivery Plans. The disadvantages mentioned related largely to the time involved in reaching agreements, and that the consultation process, by its nature, generated greater complexity.

The greatest challenges for planners in operating strategically within a comprehensive network for infrastructure planning relates to fostering partnerships with all the necessary stakeholders. Stakeholder theory as proposed by Boaden in 1980, has been cited in more recent planning literature (Baker et al, 2010, p.577), and offers a useful framework through which to discuss planner / stakeholder collaboration. Stakeholder theory proposes the existence of a category of major elites. Boaden (1980) argued that, without the cooperation and advice of these major elites, local planning authorities would find it difficult or even impossible to adopt and implement plans' (see Chapter 2). It is clear that elite stakeholders must be interacting with local planners as an integral part of the infrastructure planning organisational network. It is imperative that local authority planners communicate with these agencies if they are to deliver infrastructure planning successfully.

What are the implications of this for planning practice? The survey has concluded, firstly, that there are considerable scalar challenges involved in identifying the entire range of stakeholders with whom it might be necessary to communicate. Previous government estimates put the number of potential partners at over 100 (ODPM, 2004a). This study, using the proposed infrastructure provider categories in the existing literature (Morphet, 2011a, pp. 146-150), confirms that planners are attempting to consult across 52 separate *categories* of stakeholder who operate both internally, peripherally and externally to the local authority (Chapter 6).

Extending communication to consult with such a wide spectrum of agencies, both internal and external to the local authorities, has considerable benefits for the quality of evidence gathered to support local policy making and strategic plans. Improvements in evidence gathering have been celebrated in recent academic research as one of the major achievements of the introduction of strategic spatial planning at the regional level (Baker & Wong, 2012; Haughton & Allmendinger 2012). Some previous research has, however, questioned whether local planners have fully embraced the use of evidence to inform local policy making (Lord & Hincks, 2010) The findings of this study show that local planners are taking a strategic approach by making progress in utilising a wider group of internal and externally based contacts to support local plans and IDPs. The following section, under the heading of Agenda, considers the challenges of policy coordination between local planners and key external infrastructure stakeholder organisations.

Agenda

The second component of the conceptual framework investigates the issue of policy synergy and integration between local planners and infrastructure stakeholder agencies. The possibility of achieving policy compatibility is the second important factor in determining the effectiveness of infrastructure planning in the local planning system.

Local planners appear to be progressing with infrastructure policy documents. The survey responses demonstrate that there has been a dramatic increase in Infrastructure Delivery Plans (IDPs) with 164 planners indicating, at the time of the survey in the autumn of 2010, that they were

working on an IDP, compared to only 16 who stated that they had been involved in producing an IDP in 2008.

This marked escalation in IDPs, and the investigative work which underpins the documents, has improved the ability of planners to pinpoint the key infrastructure related policy issues which are likely to affect the success of the local plan. By using the information in a targeted way, planners are clearly now better placed to improve the prospects for delivery of the local plan through better targeted contact and dialogue with key infrastructure stakeholder agencies to influence their respective corporate strategies and long term business planning.

Evidence provided by planners in the survey revealed that the key infrastructure issues which feature most commonly in IDPs for local authorities relate to water and transport infrastructure policies. The survey also demonstrated that the key agencies with whom planners need to engage are the Environment Agency, private water companies and the Highways Agency (Chapter 6). When evaluated against the stakeholder theory proposed by Boaden (1980), it can be argued that these key infrastructure provider agencies warrant the term 'super elite' stakeholder because their involvement was proven to be necessary through the IDP investigations and are demonstrably related to the key policy needs of the local plan.

There are clearly considerable challenges for planners in liaising with key infrastructure stakeholder agencies, particularly those who operate externally to the public sector. Although LPAs might consider a particular infrastructure project essential to the success of the local plan, the stakeholder who might be responsible for the provision of that project is not necessarily in a compliant relationship with them. Indeed, its is argued that,

> " In many instances - especially in the public policy field - those upon whom action depends are not in any hierarchical association with those making policy. By definition, public policy is often aimed at directing or intervening in the activities of private interests and agencies. Implementation agencies will thus, in many instances, be autonomous or semi autonomous with their own interests and priorities to pursue and their own policy making role" (Barrett & Fudge,1981, p.12)

Collaborative capacity has been defined as the capacity and readiness of an organisation to collaborate (Huxham 1993). Collective actor capacity is a term which has been used in the context of strategic spatial planning to explore the extent to which the diverse actors and networks which coexist within a territory, urban region, city or neighbourhood cluster create the capacity to act for a territory (Healey, 2006; Newman, 2008). Establishing whether planners have any prospects for building an integrated approach to infrastructure planning therefore involves thoroughly exploring the willingness and ability of the infrastructure provider agencies to cooperate. In order to fully address Objective 3 of this study, a series of interviews and focus groups have been conducted with three infrastructure provider agencies identified as key stakeholders from

the survey of planners: the Environment Agency; United Utilities plc, the private water company operating in the North West region; and the Highways Agency.

The research findings related to stakeholder involvement must also be considered in the light of the direction of Coalition policy within the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and, in particular, in relation to the Duty to Cooperate. The Duty to Cooperate specifies a defined list of public bodies that have a statutory duty to cooperate with local authorities in the formulation of local strategic planning. The public bodies who have this statutory duty are listed in Chapter 3, but include the Environment Agency and the Highways Agency. As Chapter 3 also explains, other agencies such as LEPs, Local Nature Partnerships and (importantly for this study), private sector utility providers are not covered by the duty and therefore could potentially prove even more difficult for local planners to negotiate with. The NPPF does, however, advise that it is in their interests and those of the local authority to cooperate. Chapter 3 explains the legal framework related to statutory duties for stakeholders.

The findings of the investigations with all three of the key infrastructure stakeholder agencies are detailed in Chapter 7. The research with these organisations focused on the North West Region for a number of reasons. It was felt important in this second phase of empirical research to drill down into a particular northern region, generally considered to be more challenged in securing infrastructure investment than regions in the south of England. Such an approach would complement the national overview of local planning practice obtained in the first phase of the empirical work. The north west region was selected for other important practical and methodological reasons; it was

important to facilitate direct face to face discussions with the planning liaison teams in each of the stakeholder agencies and to conduct the interviews over a sustained period to conduct follow up discussions. A previous planning research project which had focused on infrastructure planning in the north west region (Holt, 2009) had identified a range of practice based contacts across the north west who had expressed a willingness to participate in further research. Using those initial contacts as a starting point to make other contacts proved an invaluable resource in developing the empirical work in this study.

The second phase of the empirical research allowed staff in all three agencies to discuss issues which have already been the subject of some discussion and debate in previously published research (Allmendinger & Haughton, 2007). These concern the potential for problematic disparities between regulatory frameworks and the internal pressures faced by such agencies on corporate priorities and timing which influence their respective investment strategies. The Environment Agency and United Utilities plc both raised concerns that planners had little understanding about EU Water Directives or the legal obligations which constrain utility providers in respect of their timeframes for waste water connection (Chapter 7). All three organisations had experienced capacity problems which they saw as a direct consequence of individual local authority insularity and a tendency for authorities to be myopic when it came to their respective local priorities and plans. It is clear from the interviews with the planning liaison teams that each of these three agencies are trying to improve communication between their organisation and all local planning authorities in the region to promote a better general rapport; and to identify ways in which

LPAs and stakeholder organisations can lobby government jointly to resolve regulatory disparities.

Despite their concerns about working in partnership with local authorities, and mindful that involvement is driven by corporate requirements and pressures, the discussions with the stakeholder agencies communicated a general willingness to work constructively with local authorities. The collaborative efforts of each of the three infrastructure provider agencies are explained in detail in chapter 7. Fig 42. summarises some of the ways in which the three stakeholder organisations are cooperating with individual LPAs in the North West. A more detailed analysis is also provided in chapter 7. The detailed face to face interviews with all three of the selected stakeholder organisations in the north west therefore shows that these agencies are striving to work constructively with LPAs in the region and that they are all keen to develop greater cooperation in the future.

Fig 42. Stakeholder Co operation with LPAs
EA, UU & HA all have well established Planning Liaison Teams
UU are proactively recruiting more planning liaison staff
EA, UU & HA all have regular face to face contact with LPAs and are constantly seeking to establish contact with more LPA teams
UU liaise across 63 separate LPAs to develop infrastructure in the NW region (the number of LPAs relates to inter regional issues on water infrastructure)
Striving to improve technical informations systems eg Geostore to improve planner usage and understanding of technical information
Providing assistance with technical modeling (particularly where LPAs are unable to fund such projects)
Developing capacity mapping
Actively participate and assist LPAs in writing DPDs
Mediate in conflicts and disputes between neighbouring LPAs
Striving for new ways to improve liaison with LPAs eg through the Association of Greater Manchester Authorities (AGMA)

(Source: Author)

Engagement

The final component of the conceptual framework explored, on a national basis, the attitudes and cultural predispositions in planning practice to determine whether the conditions for constructive dialogue on infrastructure planning exist, and are likely to be cultivated in the longer term.

In general respondents to the survey quoted instances through which they had observed the practical benefits associated with engagement; there was a sense that they possess the necessary conviction to promote and extend dialogue with all stakeholders. Their main point of concern was that they remained to be convinced about the real commitment which existed within the stakeholder

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agencies to achieving the conditions for long term engagement. To some degree, the concerns observed from the survey are symptomatic of the lack of contact there has been in the past. Confidence in cooperating can only develop through face to face dialogue between particular individuals over time. Clearly individual personalities, and the existence of opportunities to work together, are likely to a be a weighty determinant in whether cooperation takes place and becomes established. The concerns expressed by planners in the national survey were the focus for enquiry in the subsequent investigations with the stakeholder agencies, and the conclusions which could be drawn are considered next.

This study has drilled down into the attitudes towards engagement in the North West, by the Environment Agency, the Highways Agency and United Utilities plc. Examining the potential for cooperation between these agencies and local planners, using the north west region as a case study, offers a particularly important test case for the government's strategy for economic growth through infrastructure development. As previously explained, both EA and HA have a statutory duty to cooperate under the terms of the NPPF and therefore it is important to determine whether such arrangements are taking place and whether they are productive. United Utilities plc is not bound by the same statutory duty to cooperate, but it is nevertheless considered to be in the interests of private sector utility providers to be positive and proactive in the way they engage with local planners.

There were some differences between the three agencies in the culture and their approach to collaboration with local planners. EA and UU both displayed great willingness to work constructively with planners; whilst the attitudes and comments made by Highways Agency planning liaison team were positive but slightly more confrontational and adversarial. The conversations with EA and UU communicated a real commitment to cultivating a better understanding of the importance of collaborative practice with planners throughout their own organisational structures and across a wider group of stakeholder agencies wherever possible.

Although the Highways Agency has a long and established history of working with local planners, the interviews do raise some concerns about the level of commitment to effective engagement compared to the other two organisations. Recent restructuring of the HA team has placed the staff under extreme pressure as they have been required to take on a host of additional duties unrelated to planning liaison. The additional workload has placed all team members under greater pressure to reduce their input and consultations with local planning teams; a situation which the team themselves see as harmful and damaging.

It was also clear in the interviews with the HA team that there are certain outspoken and dominant personalities within the group who create a culture and attitude towards working with local authority planners which might not necessarily reflect the corporate aims and objectives. The senior manager of the HA team went to some lengths in the interviews to restate the corporate view that planning liaison was of critical importance to the organisation. Indeed

there was a clear sense that the senior manager's attendance at the group discussions was to ensure that the corporate message was communicated clearly and to monitor and correct any outspoken comment by individual team members. There are other, wider, underlying reasons which might be driving the attitudes observed in the HA team and these are explored more fully in the policy implications section.

This study provides a snapshot of three stakeholder agencies but is confined to one region. Clearly similar types of investigations with EA HA and utility providers would be necessary to explore whether the findings from the north west are typical across the country or more a product of the culture and composition of the particular teams interviewed. Nevertheless, the findings made as part of this study provide new insights into partnership working between planners, non government organisations and the private sector.

Policy Implications

This section explores the relevance of the research findings about local infrastructure planning practices within the wider national infrastructure planning policy context. This study has argued that infrastructure planning has increasingly been promoted by politicians, economists and the media as a mechanism for stimulating economic growth and recovery. Such a trend is evident both internationally and domestically in national government policy making. The Coalition government has sealed their commitment by announcing the National Infrastructure Plan (HM Treasury, 2010; 2011; 2012); a strategy for major infrastructure investment in an effort to achieve sustainable and balanced growth economically and environmentally. Even more importantly, the government and key stakeholders have pledged to develop a more strategic approach towards regeneration, business development and infrastructure planning across all regions and localities to stimulate growth, not just in economically buoyant regions but also to address disparities and draw infrastructure investment into those regions which lag behind (Heseltine, 2013).

Recent planning reforms have reframed the planning system to a national / local nexus cutting out any regional institutional framework for strategic decision making. The recommendations in the Heseltine Review (Heseltine, 2013), most of which the government has endorsed, include the empowerment of LEPs, £350 million investment in the Regional Growth Fund, and the promotion of combined local authorities. There have been suggestions from a policy think tank, the IPPR, that the response to the Heseltine Review lacks real commitment (Henderson, 2013); but Coalition reforms do bring the role of practitioners, including planners, operating within localities into much sharper

focus. They demand that local practitioners adapt to the reframed institutional framework for planning and operate strategically in response to the National Infrastructure Plan and wider government objectives for economic recovery.

Until this study, the implications for locally based infrastructure planning have, however, not been examined in any depth. For the domestic policy ambitions for infrastructure planning to be realised, local practitioners across all regions of the country will need to be more closely aligned with national policy making in planning; coordinating and delivering infrastructure in order to compete effectively on behalf of their own regional areas to secure an equitable share and balanced spatial distribution of the investment opportunities which arise. Practitioners in public and private bodies will need to cooperate and coordinate their infrastructure strategies within and across local areas in all regions; perhaps even more so in the northern regions where chronic economic stagnation is most acute. The findings of this study suggest that a collaborative culture can be detected between local authority planners and stakeholders across all regions of the country. This suggests that local planning can respond effectively to the national infrastructure strategy and, even more importantly, that there is an opportunity to start to redress the imbalances of the north south divide.

The discussion now turns to considering the underlying causes for the trend towards local collaboration which have been revealed in the empirical research. The literature and policy reviews suggest two potential reasons why local practitioners from the public and other sectors are cooperating; the first of these links to the theme of austerity urbanism and the second is associated with the process of public policy implementation.

Peck (2012) has argued that the effects of austerity urbanism in the United States have created a situation across America where local practitioners from the public sector, non profit and business sectors are forced to cooperate in local areas to cope with economic and social deterioration in local services. The insights which have been gained into the way that local practitioners operate in England could be linked to similar causes. Coalition government policy hinges on stringent cuts in public sector spending, redundancies amongst public sector staff and a ruthless scaling down of public sector services (Tyler, 2013, Haughton & Hincks, 2013). Local authority planning departments have not escaped unaffected. Observing that local authority planners now work more closely with other internal local authority departments could, therefore, be associated with the need to make effective use of the limited remaining resources within individual authorities and also be the driver for neighbouring authorities to work in closer association.

Local authorities are not alone in facing cut backs in staffing and other resources; at least one of the stakeholder agencies who participated in this study has also been affected recently by restructuring, staffing reductions and taking on additional responsibilities. The staff from the Highways Agency planning liaison team expressed their concerns that they were unable to work as constructively as they had done in the past with local authority planners because they have recently been given a range of additional duties and responsibilities which reduced the amount of time they could give to planning liaison with local authority planners. In addition, the Highways Agency team also suggested that growing pressures on them detracted from their ability to have input into local planning for infrastructure at an early consultation stage and was putting pressure on them to resort to more obstructive tactics, such as deliberate, last minute objections, at the planning applications stage.

The institutional degradation which Peck has identified in public sector services in the United States caused non profit organisations and businesses to back fill where public sector institutions were unable to continue to fund or work on particular issues. The evidence collected at interview with the three stakeholder organisations in the north west of England reveals similar situations here. All three organisations were being forced to step in to finance technical modeling of infrastructure planning options where local authorities could not fund such work. The planning liaison team at United Utilities also expressed concerns about the IT costs where local authorities came forward with local plans which contained several infrastructure options and all the alternatives required expensive modeling exercises to be evaluated by the company. The Environment Agency planning liaison team explained that they had been obliged to support a local

authority that had run into a funding gap for a major infrastructure project which threatened the regeneration strategy for an entire town centre in one of the most economically challenged regions in the country. The example cited at interview was very clearly an instance where EA had had no option but to support a struggling local authority to deal with a crisis which would otherwise have resulted in the failure of a project designed to stimulate desperately needed employment and support the stagnant local economy.

The abolition of the regional strategic tier of planning under the Coalition government reforms has also impacted upon the three stakeholder agencies. All three were seeking to liaise directly with individual LPAs on infrastructure projects which cut across or involved a number of local authority areas. The Environment Agency explained that they have acted as a 'mediator' in disputes over infrastructure projects between neighbouring authorities. The empirical findings, particularly the comments made by stakeholders in the north west, do suggest that the conditions for infrastructure planning in local areas mirror, to some extent, some of the scenarios and observations Peck has made in the United States about back filling which results from austerity measures imposed by central government.

There are other possible underlying causes for the research findings that local authority planners, the wider local authority and other sectors are working in cooperation which relates to the nature of public policy implementation. Sabatier (1998) observed that complex and profound changes in public policy can take up to a decade before any reasonable assessment can be made of the impact upon practice. In his work on European spatial planning, Albrechts (2006) has made similar observations about the amount of time it has taken for several countries to make significant progress with the implementation of strategic spatial planning (see Chapter 4).

The fact that the empirical investigations conducted in this study have detected that local planners do now connect more proactively with the wider authority and with stakeholders in other sectors may also, therefore, be a consequence of this latent effect of public policy implementation. The detailed guidance and training planners received on spatial planning, and the encouragement and enthusiasm with which New Labour planning reforms were received by the professional bodies, may well have had a greater appeal amongst local planning practitioners than has been evident in previous studies of spatial planning implementation, but the evidence for this has taken time to become apparent. Coalition government planning reforms do not preclude the broad principles of spatial planning which were integrated into the English version introduced to planners in the New Labour reforms. Indeed, in initiating reforms such as the 'presumption in favour of sustainable development' and the 'duty to cooperate', the Coalition government reform programme may well have galvanised LPAs to redouble their efforts to implement spatial planning and

collaborate with stakeholders to build sound evidence and facilitate joint working with stakeholders in other sectors.

The likelihood is that what can now be detected in current practice is an overlapping and layered response to the series of planning reform programmes initiated by both New Labour and the Coalition government over the past 16 years. It is possible that this overlapping is a consequence of the transition period between successive government planning reform programmes. Theories of implementation have been used by academic researchers to explore the introduction and effects of spatial planning (Baker & Hincks, 2009; Clifford, 2007; 2009; 2012) but, in the absence of a change of government before 2010, the previous research has not considered this layering effect of policy programmes. The planner survey was conducted in 2011, about a year into the new government, and it is possible that the effects of New Labour planning reforms may diminish over time as new planning reforms become established and absorbed into daily practice.

The two possible explanations which have been put forward here to explain the level of cooperation which has been detected in local infrastructure planning practice are not necessarily mutually exclusive scenarios. Indeed it is far more likely that the current state of local practice is founded upon hybridity; i.e. it is both a response to austerity measures and a consequence of the latent effect of spatial planning becoming more firmly ingrained in local planning practice. Future snapshots of the type conducted in this study would be necessary to determine whether a spatial planning approach is a more permanent feature of English local planning.

Adapting to policy experimentation and changing governance landscapes is

nothing new to local practitioners and this suggests that there is an inbuilt

adaptability in planning practice which will obviate the strategic vacuum created

by the revocation of the regional planning framework and facilitate the

strengthening of strategic capability for infrastructure planning at the local level.

The planning literature chronicles the frequent reworking of both the policy

scope and scales of planning over the past 30 years (Allmendinger & Haughton,

2007; Haughton & Allmendinger, 2012; Wong & Baker, 2012). Indeed, it has

been observed that the planning system in England has been the subject of

more frequent change than many other European countries (Haughton &

Allmendinger, 2012).

Allmendinger & Haughton (2009) argued that this pattern of repeated reform

and the consequent institutional turbulence reflects, "...the state's 'restless

search' for governance" (Allmendinger & Haughton, 2009, p.631) and regard

this an inevitable product of the workings of neoliberal forms of spatial

governance. The constantly shifting planning framework is characterised by the

transformation of practices and institutions overtime through " A process of

experimentation and policy rupture " (Baker & Wong, 2012, p.16). Planning has

been subjected to comprehensive and repeated experimentation which has

impacted on the planning system, planning policies and planning practices. In

terms of the system experimentation; the transition from land use, to spatial

planning and latterly to localism has been depicted as the, "... the periodic

transformations from one paradigm to another" (Haughton & Allmendinger,

2012). Systems change has inevitably given rise to policy change; Baker &

Wong (2012) illustrate the significance of policy change through work to chart the fortunes of regional strategic planning,

> "...From RPG to RSS and the proposed integrated RS; from ad hoc policy implementation and monitoring to more coordinated infrastructure delivery plans and AMRs, and from isolated examples of cross boundary working to more widespread sub-regional collaboration across functional areas such as SHMAs" (Baker & Wong, 2012, p.16)

Practice based experimentation is also an inherent feature of the English planning system and is a product of this repeated pattern of reform and policy change. It has been observed for some time that the constantly shifting planning landscape opens up the soft spaces (Allmendinger & Haughton, 2009) between formal structures and procedures. Under these circumstances, practitioners operate in more pragmatic ways to utilise the prevailing framework, accommodate local circumstances and steer their way through complexity and uncertainty. Evidence of this practice based experimentation has been identified in previous research (Hincks, 2010; Hincks & Baker, 2012) and has similarly emerged in this study when examining how local infrastructure planning has impacted on the practitioners who have participated in this study. Changes to local planning under New Labour necessitated the coordination and delivery of infrastructure as an integral component for local planners in the development of Local Development Frameworks, guided by PPS12 (ODPM, 2004; CLG, 2008a). LPAs were to develop DPDs supported by Infrastructure Delivery Plans (IDPs) and Schedules (IDSs); local planners were also required to participate in Infrastructure Delivery Groups (IDGs) with other stakeholders. Within the New

Labour policy framework, local planners have been relying on their own initiative and steadily, but proactively, working out how to operationalise their infrastructure planning strategies and interpret the guidance in ways best tailored to their local circumstances. As this study has shown, planners have indicated that they have made progress in working towards effective approaches on infrastructure issues irrespective of these continual shifts and changes.

Local practice will need to continue to display resilience and adaptability to the new organisational architecture in the future. The replacement of RDAs with LEPs illustrates the point as currently there is almost universal agreement that the role and responsibilities related to LEPs remains uncertain. The interrelationships between planning and LEPs remain unclear (Hincks, 2010; Pugalis & Townsend, 2012); LEPs have limited financial and analytical resources (Haughton & Allmendinger, 2012; Pugalis & Townsend, 2012) and their strategic capacity has not been fully considered even though almost half of the 24 LEPs initially approved in October 2010 cut across regional boundaries (Baker & Wong, 2012).

Plotting the scalar shifts affecting planning has also become an accepted and integral part of planning research. Scalar reorientations in response to political policy changes have given rise to changing fortunes for local planning and an ebb and flow over time in the importance of its role in strategy making. The reform of the planning system between 2004-2009 reorientated the focus of strategic spatial planning to the national and regional levels at the expense of the subregional scale (Marshall, 2009). The rise in importance of regional
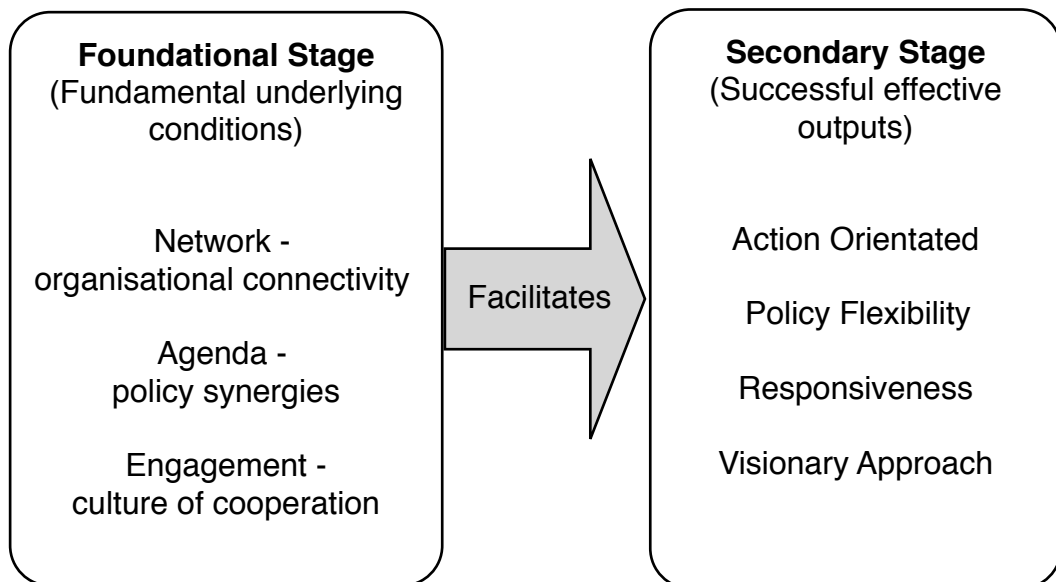
strategic planning stimulated debates surrounding the importance of strategic planning and the contribution they make in providing an appropriate 'spatial platform' at the local level (Bianconi et al 2006; Hincks, 2010; Haughton et al, 2010).

This study also reveals an alternative approach to searching for the signs of spatial planning implementation based on a more European perspective. The key distinguishing principles of spatial planning from European models were identified in Chapter 2 and it was argued that these characteristics also framed the English version of spatial planning as shown in Figs 1, 2 and 3 (see chapter 2). The English model of strategic spatial planning has been constructed around a set of aspirational characteristics which state that strategic spatial planning is defined as integrative; visionary; action orientated; selective; relational. These basic characteristics frame both the European and the model of spatial planning which emerged in the UK.

A critical reading of the existing literature suggests that the characteristics which define strategic spatial planning have frequently been lumped together with limited attention given to whether there is any sequential process to their emergence in practice. Reflecting on the outcomes of the study, it is possible to argue, conceptually, that the idealised characteristics necessary for the implementation of strategic spatial planning should be subdivided into two sequential groups. Under this argument, some features of spatial planning are fundamental and create the context, and a favourable practice based environment, for other features to emerge. Considering spatial planning in this way could prove useful for studying the implementation of spatial planning in the

future, as it might be possible to look for signs of spatial planning according to a logical order. Features of strategic spatial planning which fall into the 'fundamental' category related to organisational connectivity, policy synergies and a general attitude of co operation (addressed in the conceptual framework under the headings network, agenda and engagement). It could be argued that these planning characteristics need to be established before it is possible to develop the 'higher' characteristics which fall into the 'secondary' stage. All the necessary partners need to be identified; respective policy priorities need to be understood; and the degree to which there is a shared willingness to cooperate needs to be assessed before any network is able to progress to fulfill the higher expectations associated with strategic spatial planning such as being flexible, responsive and visionary (Fig 43. below).

Fig 43. Stages in the Implementation of Strategic Planning

Foundational Stage
(Fundamental underlying conditions)

Network -
organisational connectivity

Agenda -
policy synergies

Engagement -
culture of cooperation

Facilitates

Secondary Stage
(Successful effective outputs)

Action Orientated

Policy Flexibility

Responsiveness

Visionary Approach

(Source: Author)

This discussion of the policy implications now turns to the question of consensus within the English spatial planning debates which have been ongoing in the academic literature throughout the past 16 years. The introduction of spatial planning into the English planning system by New Labour prompted considerable debate in academic circles (see Chapter 2). Fundamental to these debates has been the questioning of the ability of practitioners to achieve consensus in practice, particularly on an inter sectoral basis. Advocates of collaborative practice would argue that consensus is achievable to some degree and that disagreement is a healthy and necessary part of collaboration process (Healey, 1998 & 2006; Huxham & Vangen, 2006). Others have argued that the darker issues and power imbalances are likely to preclude genuine agreement (Harris, 2002; Brand & Gaffikin, 2007), suggesting that consensus is a naive notion particularly in the context of business and commercial activity.

Such questions were given careful consideration in listening to the comments and views of the three stakeholder agencies involved in this study. The methodological approach to the research was carefully designed to enable face to face discussions in order to develop a rapport and promote frank discussion. Given the seniority of the interviewees from each of the organisations involved in the study, it can safely assumed that the responses given provide an honest and forthright overview of the corporate aims and objectives of each agency. Commercial objectives were openly discussed by members of staff from United Utilities. There was no evidence at any point during the interviews that the stakeholder agencies had anything other than a genuine intention to work in a constructive way with LPAs to mutual benefit.

Implications for Practice

As well as broader issues relating to the general policy context, there are more direct lessons for current practice that emerge from the research findings. The following provides a summary of the key points of relevance to practicing local planners and stakeholders in the light of the findings from this study:-

- Local planners and stakeholder agencies need to grasp the new opportunities to develop local partnerships inherent in the localist agenda and the latest recommendations contained in the Heseltine Review (Heseltine, 2013)

- Planners from all local authorities should place greater emphasis on establishing an ongoing dialogue with targeted infrastructure provider agencies as soon as their the pivotal role in the IDP has been established.

- Key stakeholder agencies convey a commitment and willingness to engage with planners, a trait which now appears to be strongly embedded in their organisational culture, and reflected in both attitudes of their employees and in the practical steps the agencies are taking to work with local planners. These observations need to be more widely communicated to planners; this could be achieved by the agencies themselves and also through training within the planning profession in order to promote further improvements in collaboration in the future.

- Planners need to develop an awareness and understanding about the range of practical initiatives, many of which are highlighted in Fig 42, which the key infrastructure stakeholder agencies have explained are available during this research via their respective in house planning liaison teams

- Planners need to explore the initiatives which the infrastructure stakeholders who have participated in this study have said are currently being formulated for the future to assist with improving their input into the LDF process, such as better communications with developers (see chapter 6). In this way planners have the opportunity to influence the direction of the developmental work being conducted by the respective agencies

- Planners should utilise their connections within their local authority structures to establish better liaison with Local Enterprise Partnerships. This would serve to open up an ongoing dialogue about the opportunities to act strategically.

- Local authority planners would benefit from further training on developing and extending strategic spatial planning in the context of the Localist agenda. The enthusiasm with which the RTPI; TCPA and POS have supported this study suggests that they would be prepared to integrate some further training to develop strategic thinking into their pre existing training programmes, and regular publications and circulars to members.

Concluding Reflections

This study has placed great emphasis on the importance of a reflecting on practice when understanding the role of planners and other infrastructure planning practitioners. Reflective principles underpin the conceptual framework and the methodology. It is therefore appropriate to adopt a similar approach when discussing the research experience associated with conducting this study itself, and in discussing the opportunities for further study arising from the key findings.

The single most important factor which has had a fundamental impact on the research process is the speed and scale of political and economic change which has impacted on planning in England during the course of the study. This has presented great opportunities and challenges. When this research project commenced in October 2009, the New Labour government was in a third, and final, term in office. The planning policy landscape was dramatically different in the initial scoping stages of the research than in the later stages. In 2009, the first year of the project, the emphasis amongst planning academics was upon

spatial planning. Researchers were interested in understanding the extent to which New Labour planning policy was being implemented in practice. The policy changes, upheavals and uncertainties for planning policy which were to come after May 2010, following the election of the Coalition government, could not have been foreseen in any detail at the start of the research, other than through some of the early policy announcements in policy green papers from the Conservative Party which gave some indication about the ideas which were being formulated (e.g. Conservatives, 2009).

In research terms, this transformation has involved grappling, not just with the policy before and after, but also with the uncertainty and confusion which characterised the transition. Some level of change is inevitable over the course of 3 to 4 years; indeed it is an integral and important part of the research process and the job of the researcher is to embrace these challenges. The cataclysmic transformations and hectic pace of changes over the past 3 years have, therefore, required the researcher to display the highest levels of flexibility and adaptability in working out the implications for the study.

Despite the challenges, in some senses, these changes may also have had a beneficial effect on the research process. The localist strategy of the Coalition government placed greater emphasis on a bottom up approach, a change which has brought local planning into much sharper focus highlighting the need for a study of local practice. Not only has the direction of Coalition policy making given greater relevance to understanding local planning, but such a radical departure from New Labour planning policy has also stimulated intense discussion and debate about the role and purpose of planning amongst

practitioners, professional bodies, the public and the media. The changes have, therefore, created a much richer research environment and context for this study.

This study has also been conducted in the shadow of the economic austerity which has followed the financial crash of 2008; this pivotal event, and the subsequent policy reactions, have exerted a fundamental influence upon this research. Indeed, the study is based on the observation that international and domestic economic recovery has become firmly anchored around infrastructure and its delivery. The fact that infrastructure planning has attracted such a high profile means that it is incumbent on researchers to start to widen the issue out from the prevailing emphasis on major infrastructures and nationally significant projects to explore infrastructure planning at other spatial scales.

The financial crisis has led to the radical public sector cuts which have been implemented by the Coalition government. The issue has also been a central theme of this study. Direct consultation with public sector planners has been at the heart of the design of the conceptual framework and the methodology for this study. In research terms it had to be recognised from the outset that it might prove extremely challenging to attempt to consult with large numbers of public sector workers just at the point when local authority budgets were being cut and jobs were coming under threat. There was a similar situation with the participants from the infrastructure provider agencies who have taken part in this study; they too have been beset by job cuts and restructuring, as well as more generally affected by the general malaise which now acts as an insidious inhibitor on all aspects of society. Mindful of all these factors, the experience of

conducting empirical work has nevertheless revealed that all sectors have been extremely willing to participate, given incredibly generously of their time, displayed a great anxiety to discuss their own insights, and shown great interest in knowing the outputs from the study.

Over the past decade or more, planners have received an extremely negative press and been heavily criticised by policy makers, politicians and academics. The vitriol has taken many often contradictory forms. Planners have variously been accused of being inhibitors of economic recovery; an obstacle to development; slow to respond to policy and legislative change; and passive, unquestioning bureaucrats content to blindly execute the will of the prevailing political administration. But arguably, the previous research conducted under New Labour to examine spatial planning in practice simply occurred too soon in the implementation process to really offer any fair assessment.

Despite the accusatory tone and universal antipathy, very little effort has been made to consult with the planners more recently to clarify what they actually do and for them to offer any form of defence for any of the charges laid against them. The paucity of detailed research into planning practice means that little is still known about the way planners have subsequently responded to the responsiblity for operationalising spatial planning. The evidence from this study suggests that the spatial planning apparatus has become embedded in practice across the country in a way that was not evident when the initial studies into the 2004 reforms took place.

But all studies, including this one, are necessarily reflective of the time they are undertaken and there are always further avenues of research that might usefully build upon them. This study has provided a general overview of the ways in which local authority planners across England conduct infrastructure planning and combined this with a more in depth insight into the capacity which exists amongst key infrastructure stakeholder agencies to co operate within the local planning system in the north west. This study could therefore be extended to investigate the collaborative capacity within other English regions in a similar way to determine whether the findings from the north west with regard to stakeholder engagement are mirrored in other regions. Only through further in depth investigation across regions, and examining regions spanning the north / south divide would it be possible to determine whether practitioners are becoming more adept in building collaborative capacity as a general trend across other regions. In a practical methodological sense, contact would need to be established with other practitioners across the country. A useful starting point would be to contact planners who participated in the survey working in LPAs outside the north west. This group could be consulted either through further survey work or face to face follow up interviews. The three stakeholder organisations who participated could also be asked to suggest key contacts in other regions.

The findings from this study could also be taken forward and linked to other larger scale research projects for infrastructure planning and regional economic development; the following explains how this could be achieved in related to some current examples. It should also be noted that the publication of the Heseltine Review in March of this year (Heseltine, 2013), and the 2013 Spending Review (Rhodes & Webb, 2013) are likely to be an important driver of further academic studies related to planning, infrastructure delivery and economic development at the subnational scale.

The outcomes and data from this study could, for example, be taken forward by exploring the links with wider ranging research into planning for infrastructure particularly in lagging regions. An example of current research being undertaken in this area is " Planning for Infrastructure: Transitional Pathways for Lagging Regions" ; a study which (Tyler, 2013) explains is currently being developed across a number of UK universities. Researching infrastructure planning at the local scale has not been explored by other contributors to this wider body of research. Findings from the empirical work from the national survey of planners, and the findings from the interviews with stakeholders in the north west, could therefore be considered in the context of this broader study.

Part of the context of the research (Chapter 3) highlighted findings from a large scale study of regional economic development also conducted by researchers at the Centre for Geographical Economic Research in Cambridge (Tyler, 2013). As explained in chapter 3, this research has, so far, focussed on the impact of public sector spending cuts on the northern regions. The findings from the empirical work outlined in chapter 7 could therefore prove useful in developing

some of the themes in the Cambridge University study which has broader aims to understand the concept of resilience to recession on a wider regional scale.

The conclusions drawn in this study related to spatial planning and its implementation in England, particularly the conceptualisation of spatial planning, which is explained in the earlier part of this chapter could be used to inform future developmental work for the RTPI following on from the Map for England project (Wong et al, 2012; RTPI, 2012). The development of integrated approaches to planning and considering how spatial planning might adapt in the context of Coalition policy making are important areas for further academic enquiry.

The research agenda surrounding collaboration offers great potential for information sharing and interconnecting the findings of various existing and emerging UK and European studies. This study, for example, has explored collaborative practices in local infrastructure planning; other academic research on Local Enterprise Partnerships and economic development has been undertaken contemporaneously (Morphet, 2011; Pugalis & Townsend, 2013). There is, therefore, an opportunity to explore how the findings from this study might be used in conjunction with recently published LEP based research to inform planning practitioners and stakeholders. The discoveries made in this study might also usefully intersect with ongoing research to explore new geographies of collaboration through 'soft spaces' in strategic planning and economic development (Allmendinger & Haughton, 2009b; Haughton et al, 2010). A component of the latest European dimension to this study, co ordinated by the University of Manchester, (Deas et al, 2013) focusses on the

Mersey Belt sub-region in the North West of England; it would therefore prove useful to consider the substantive findings explained in this chapter, in the context of this larger scale study.

At the time of writing the closing remarks in this thesis, it is rapidly becoming apparent that national policies based on austerity measures, straitjacketing the planning profession and postulating about the long term benefits of major infrastructure projects (which have not yet started and, even if they do, will take years to come on stream) are not providing the quick fix solution to the economic stagnation and development paralysis which afflicts the country. This study provides empirical evidence that local practitioners in the public, non profit and business sectors across all regions are actively involved in new forms of collaborative geographies on infrastructure planning, and they are therefore, well placed to kick start economic recovery based on more immediate local infrastructure needs and requirements. In highlighting this, so far, overlooked dimension to infrastructure planning, it is hoped that this study has helped to make a contribution to the ongoing discussion about the value and importance of high quality local planning and the critical role local practitioners from all sectors can now play in promoting economic wellbeing through local infrastructure delivery.

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APPENDIX 1

EXPLANATORY NOTE TO PARTICIPANTS IN SURVEY PILOT EXERCISE

(AUGUST 2011)

Research into infrastructure planning has so far largely focused upon nationally significant projects, for example high speed rail. The Centre for Urban Policy Studies at the University of Manchester is now investigating the ways in which infrastructure planning is being approached at other spatial scales. The following offers a brief explanation of the rationale behind the Manchester study.

This project examines the extent and nature of infrastructure planning undertaken by Local Authority Planners across England. It is essential to highlight and disseminate information about practices between planning colleagues as this will help not just to increase the number of core strategies achieving adopted status, but more importantly improve the likelihood that the local 'spatial vision' will in fact be translated into action in an increasing number of geographical areas across the country. Objectives which are equally important in the new era of localism as they were under the previous government.

This study also explores how planners engage with corporate led infrastructure planning strategies. Working to improve the interaction between professional planners and their corporate colleagues will help to achieve a more coordinated strategic approach to the delivery of local and regionally based infrastructure requirements, an issue so critical to economic recovery across all regions.

Despite the fact that infrastructure planning, as expressed in the Core Strategy is fundamental to the delivery of the vision for an areas, there has been limited research into the manner in which local authority planners have attempted to collate the infrastructure evidence base to support the Core Strategy; the quality of the engagement which they have established with key stakeholders, service provider agencies and communities; and critically the extent to which this important information is shared between the planners and their corporate colleagues.

In the light of recent Coalition policy announcements, it has never been more important for infrastructure planning to be developed by local authority planners, as explained in the following:-

The presumption in favour of sustainable development linked to the National Planning Policy Framework means that achieving an adopted Core Strategy (Local Plan) and the Infrastructure Delivery Plan has become more pressing as a means of ensuring that local views are appropriately reflected.

A comprehensive and accurate infrastructure evidence based is essential to making progress with the Community Infrastructure Levy.

The fuzzy conceptual basis of localism leaves local communities in a void in terms of understanding how to put the concept into practice. Much professional expertise from local planners will be needed to support all communities, particularly the disadvantaged and disaffected with their neighbourhood plans.

Involvement in infrastructure planning gives the planning profession the opportunity to play a more central and proactive role in informing corporate infrastructure initiatives and in contributing to the development of Local Enterprise Partnerships

The study aims to learn from those authorities who have demonstrated their expertise with infrastructure planning to see if any of the skills are valuable to planners in other localities. Promoting the importance of infrastructure planning amongst planners will benefit local authorities as a corporate entity and improve the quality and effectiveness of regional and national infrastructure strategies.

APPENDIX 2

COPY OF LETTER TO PARTICIPANTS IN SURVEY

School of Environment & Development
University of Manchester
Oxford Road
Manchester M13 9PL

31/08/2011

Email: vivien.holt@postgrad.manchester.ac.uk

Dear RTPI Member

Re: Invitation to Participate in the National Survey of Local Authority Infrastructure Planning

The Centre for Urban Policy Studies at the University of Manchester is conducting a national online survey of local authority planners in England. The aim of the survey is to examine the extent and nature of local infrastructure planning as it is being approached by planning professionals. The research data will be used to strengthen the link between planners and their corporate colleagues to promote local infrastructure delivery, and to strive for better co ordination of infrastructure planning activity between all spatial scales.

For a number of important reasons, such a study has never been more necessary and timely. For practitioners, effective infrastructure planning is essential to achieving an adopted Core Strategy, making progress with CIL, and addressing coalition planning reforms more generally. This study of planning practice will also provide key research evidence necessary to respond to recent academic discussion which questions the value and feasibility of spatial planning in England.

In writing to you directly, we would like to invite you to complete the questionnaire personally, and / or distribute the link to other planning colleagues who have experience of working on Local Development Frameworks for Local Authorities.

The questionnaire can be accessed very easily by using the following link, which will direct you to the online questionnaire via Survey Monkey. An extensive consultation exercise has been conducted with key academic experts and local authority practitioners with direct experience of infrastructure planning, to ensure that the questionnaire has been rigorously tested. The questionnaire should take no more than 15 to 20 minutes to complete.

Questionnaire Link:- https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/InfrastructureDelivery

All Local Authority Chief Planners in England have been contacted directly about the survey. The link to the questionnaire is also being advertised and promoted to planning professionals through a wide range of other initiatives in association with RTPI, the Planning Officers Society, TCPA, and Communities of Practice Website, throughout September. The survey can be followed electronically via:- **twitter.com/VivienHolt** and **http://vivien-holt.blogspot.com**

COPY OF NATIONAL SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE

National Survey of Local Authority Planners in England and Infrastructure Delivery

Guidance Notes

Thank you for agreeing to take part!

In appreciation of your participation, a complementary copy of the summary report for this survey will be provided, upon request. You can register your interest in obtaining a copy at the end of this questionnaire.

This questionnaire has been extensively tested by planning practitioners; in their experience it takes approximately 15 – 20 minutes to complete. You may exit the survey at any stage before completion without losing your answers provided that you return to complete the survey using the same computer and browser. On completing the survey, please press 'done' to submit your answers. After you have pressed 'done' you will no longer be able to return.

Base your answers on your own personal experience of strategic planning. You are not expected to provide a definitive response on behalf of your local authority.

Focus on current circumstances, rather than how things might be done in the future in response to forthcoming legislative changes.

Most of the questions provide a wide range of possible options, these will act as a useful prompt, to minimise the length of time needed to complete this questionnaire.

If there are any questions to which you do not know a precise or detailed

answer, it is perfectly acceptable to give an educated guess or approximation

based on your experience.

If there are any questions to which you cannot provide any sort of answer, the

questionnaire is designed to allow you to bypass those questions and continue

to complete and submit the questionnaire partially completed.

All responses will be regarded as strictly confidential and used anonymously in

any analysis of the data.

Section One: General Information

This section seeks to obtain some brief details about the local authority in which

you work.

1. Please indicate the type of local authority

2. In which region is the authority located?

3. In your opinion, are any of the following issues of particular relevance to your

local authority area, please tick all that apply;

• Area facing high level of development pressure
• Area facing decline / regeneration challenges
• Area of radically changing demographic patterns
• An area of significant infrastructure deficits
• None of the above are a factor in this area

4. What is the current status of the Development Plan Core Strategy for the

local authority?

• Adopted
• Adopted, but under review
• Sound, pending adoption
• Sound, but unlikely to be adopted
• Submitted & awaiting / at examination
• In preparation
• Preparation halted / under review
  Other (please specify)

Section Two: Planners, Infrastructure & Stakeholder Engagement

Infrastructure planning linked to the Core Strategy necessarily involves Planners interacting with other agencies, partners and service providers. This section is intended to assess the range and level of engagement which exists between Planners and other stakeholders concerning the delivery of infrastructure necessary to support the Core Strategy.

Question 11 & 12 provide a quick and comprehensive check list to actively prompt you to consider the full range of potential stakeholders. You are not expected to provide definitive answers on the level of engagement in the case of each stake holder, a quick general impression based on your own knowledge is perfectly acceptable for the purpose of this study.

5. What is your role within the local authority planning team?

- Chief Officer
- Principal Officer
- Senior Officer
- Planning Officer
- Other (please specify)

6. How many Planning Professionals are currently work in Forward Planning / Planning Policy in the Local Authority?

- <2
- 2-5
- 6-10
- >10

7. Are the Planners in the Authority working on any aspect of infrastructure

planning?

• Yes
• No (go to question 10)

8. If you have answered, yes to the previous question, what sorts of

infrastructure planning activities are Planners involved in? Please tick all

relevant activities.

• Developing the Infrastructure Schedule to inform DPDs
  Preparation of an Infrastructure Delivery Plan document to inform DPDs
  Working with LEP(s)
• Negotiation of CIL and/or Developer Contributions
• Participation in any form of Infrastructure Delivery Group
• Contributing to broader Corporate based infrastructure planning
• Contributing to cross boundary infrastructure planning through liaison with
  other Local Authorities
• Other (please specify)

9. How long ago did work commence on the Infrastructure Schedule associated

with Local Development Plans

• < 6 months
• 6 -12 months
• 1-2years
• 2-3years
• > 3 years

10. If the authority has not yet started to address infrastructure delivery, is there

any intention to commence work in the near future?

• Yes
• No (go to question 18)
• Don't know
• N/A

If yes, what is the anticipated timetable?

11. How would you describe the level of engagement which currently exists

between the Planners and other LOCAL AUTHORITY STAKEHOLDERS in

formulating the Infrastructure Schedule?

(No engagement; Some engagement; Fully engaged)

- Transport
- Energy
- Water & Drainage Waste
- Public Realm Historic Legacy
- Open Space
- Affordable Housing
- Education
- Children's Services
- Health & Social Care
- Community Services
- Leisure Services
- Not required in this area

12. How would you describe the level of engagement which currently exists

between the Planners and other NON LOCAL AUTHORITY STAKEHOLDERS

in formulating the Infrastructure Schedule?

(Not required in this area; No engagement; Some engagement; Fully engaged)

- Highways Agency
- Network Rail
- Bus Companies
- Airport Authorities
- Energy providers
- Port & Harbour Authorities Sustrans
- Department of Transport DVLA
- British Waterways
- OFGEN
- Strategic Health Authority
- OFWAT
- Water Treatment Companies
- Environment Agency
- BT
- OFCOM
- English Heritage National Park Authorities Natural England
- River Catchment Management Authorities
- Registered Social Landlords
- Universities
- DWP
- Strategic Health Authority Primary Care Trust

- Post Office
- DBERR
- Police Authority
- Fire Authority
- Ambulance Trust
- Ministry of Justice
- Home Office
- Places of Worship
- Charities

13. In general terms, how would you describe the level of input into the

Infrastructure Schedule from the following groups?

(No engagement; Some engagement; Fully engaged)
- Parish Councils
- Neighbourhood Groups
- Community Groups
- Resident/ Tenants Associations
- Other Voluntary Sector Local Business Community
- Not required in this area

14. How effectively do you regard the infrastructure planning process to have

adequately identified the 'show stopper' issues contained within the Core

Strategy?

(Not identified at all; Fully identified; N/A)

- If possible, please summarise the "show stopper" issues

15. Based on the experience of your planning team, are the key agencies,

partners and service providers associated with these 'show stopper' issues

committed to seeking solutions through collaboration and partnership working in

the long term?

Level of commitment amongst key agencies

- Additional comments
- Not at all committed
- Fully committed N/A

16. Has the experience of developing Infrastructure Schedules made the

planners in the authority more or less convinced of the value and importance of

engaging with other agencies, partners and service providers in delivering the

Core Strategy over the long term?

• More convinced
• Less convinced
• Don't know
  Any additional comment

Section Three: Planners, Infrastructure & Cross Boundary Working

17. Is infrastructure planning for your authority being undertaken jointly with

other local authorities?

• Yes
• No
  If yes (please specify)

18. If the answer to the previous question is no, has your authority any intention

to collaborate with other authorities in the future?

• Yes
• No (go to question 25)
• Don't know
• N/A
• Additional comments

19. If infrastructure planning has been or is being undertaken jointly with other

authorities, what have been the advantages? Please select all that apply.

• Improved the delivery of infrastructure
• Speeded up IDP preparation time
• More effective use of staffing resources
• Improved quality of IDP data
• Improved confidence in joint working
  Strengthened commitment to implementation
• No advantages
Other (please specify)

20. If infrastructure planning has been or is being undertaken jointly with other authorities, what have been the disadvantages? Please tick all that apply.

• Slowed down IDP preparation
• Required too much staff time
• Led to unsatisfactory/confused IDP data
• Damaged confidence in joint working
• No serious disadvantages
  Other (please specify)

Section Four: Planners & Infrastructure Delivery Plans

This section explores the Planners role in producing and publishing the

Infrastructure Delivery Plan or similar document/s in support of the Core

Strategy.

21. What is the current status of the Infrastructure Delivery Plan which

underpins the LDF?

• Published
• Published, but now under review
• In preparation
• Preparation halted
• Not yet commenced
• Additional comments

22. If an IDP is published or in preparation, what is the geographical area

covered?

23. If work on the infrastructure schedule/IDP has been halted or subject to

delay, please rate the following possible causes.

• Staffing issues
• Financial pressures
• Uncertainty related to coalition government policy reforms (eg abolition of
  RSS, emerging NPPF)
• Collaborative issues with other stakeholders
• Not a problem
• Problematic
• Serious problem
• Political factors with the Authority
• Collaborative issues with other Authorities

24. If you have indicated in the previous question that coalition policy reforms have been an inhibitory factor in developing the IDP, please indicate how significant the following factors have been

• Shift towards Localism in general
• Particulars in the Localism Bill
• Community Infrastructure Levy
• National Planning Policy Framework
• Very significant
• Significant
• Somewhat significant
• Not significant
• N/A
• Abolition of the Regional Spatial Strategy
• Introduction of Local Enterprise Partnerships
• Reduction in County Council powers

Section Five: Training & Facilitation of Infrastructure Planning

This section explores the type of knowledge and support Planners have sought concerning infrastructure delivery in general and particularly related to the Core Strategy.

25. Have any of the planning team attended training, supported learning or arranged for consultants to facilitate the development of their infrastructure planning work?

• Yes
  No (go to question 27)
• If yes, which agencies have been involved?

26. If the LPA is working on a infrastructure planning, what effect has training and facilitation had on this process?

• Made an essential contribution
• Made no difference
• Moderately helpful
• Delayed progress
• No training requested
• No facilitation commissioned
• Additional comments

27. Is the LPA likely to need additional training, or the support of other agencies external to the local authority, in the future?

- Yes
- No
- Don't Know
  Additional comments (please specify)

Section Six: Planner Participation in Infrastructure Delivery Groups

This section aims to identify the full range of Infrastructure Delivery Groups to which Planners are contributing. In this context therefore, please include corporate led Infrastructure Delivery Groups, in addition to any groups whose remit is more specifically concerned with the Core Strategy.

28. Do Planners in the Local Authority convene or participate in ANY FORM of Infrastructure Delivery Group?

- Yes
  No (go to question 31)

29. If your answer to the previous question is yes, please specify the nature of involvement. Please tick all that apply

- Infrastructure Delivery Board
- Infrastructure Providers Group
- Additional Infrastructure Group/ Sub Group
- Other (please specify)

30. Who initiated the Infrastructure Group(s) which Planners in the authority currently attend? Please tick all relevant options

- Local Authority (eg Chief Executives)
  Local Strategic Partnership / successor agency
- Local Authority Planners
  LEP
  Sub-regional partnership
- Other (please specify)

31. Do you think that Planners in the Authority should have more or less input

into Corporate led infrastructure planning groups than at present?

• More Planner input into corporate infrastructure planning
• Less Planner input
• Planner input should stay the same
• Don't know

32. What level of support does the involvement of Planners in Infrastructure

Delivery Group(s) have at a Local Authority Corporate level?

• Leader
• Senior Councillors
• Corporate Management Team
• Additional comments
• Strongly supportive
• Supportive
• Unsupportive
• Chief Executive

33. Is the Infrastructure Delivery Group in which planners participate a

subsidiary of the Local Strategic Partnership or any successor agency?

• Yes
• No
• Don't Know
• Not relevant (go to question 38)
  Additional comments

34. If you are a member of an Infrastructure Delivery Group, do you consider

the group to have already developed or be capable of developing a clear

strategy towards the long term management and delivery of infrastructure in

your area?

• Yes
• No
• Don't Know N/A
• Additional Comments

35. Does the Infrastructure Delivery Group have a clearly defined approach to monitoring the effectiveness of the groups' activities upon the delivery of infrastructure?

- Yes
- No
- Don't Know
- Additional Comments

36. Where an Infrastructure Delivery Strategy has been initiated, has there been any improvement in the implementation of local development plans?

- Yes
- No
- Don't Know

37. If you are a member of an Infrastructure Delivery Group, has this experience made you more or less convinced of the value and importance of Infrastructure Groups to infrastructure delivery?

- More Convinced
- Less Convinced
- Don't Know
  Additional Comments

THANK YOU!

You have now completed the main part of the questionnaire.

38. Would you like to receive a complementary copy of the summary report for this survey?

- Yes
- No
  If yes, please provide an email address for delivery

39. How did you find out about this survey?

- Chief Planning Officer in your Local Authority
- From another Planning Officer in your Local Authority
- Other Local Authority
- University of Manchester email
- TCPA Bulletin

- RTPI
- Communities of Practice Website
- UK/Northern Ireland Planning Conference
- Other (please specify)

The link to the survey is being publicised widely throughout September, in

co operation with RTPI, TCPA, The Planning Officers Society and Communities

of Practice Website.

Follow the survey on

twitter.com/VivienHolt and vivien-holt.blogspot.com

PLEASE PASS THIS LINK ON TO OTHER LOCAL AUTHORITY PLANNING

OFFICERS:- https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/InfrastructureDelivery

Your participation is very much appreciated

NOW PLEASE PRESS DONE TO SUBMIT YOUR ANSWERS

APPENDIX 4

COPY OF LETTER TO ALL CHIEF PLANNING OFFICERS IN ENGLAND

Email: vivien.holt@postgrad.manchester.ac.uk

Dear

Re: Invitation to Participate in the National Survey of Local Authority Infrastructure Planning

The University of Manchester Centre for Urban Policy Studies is conducting a national online survey of local authority planners in England. The aim of the survey is to examine the extent and nature of local infrastructure planning as it is being approached by planning professionals. The research data will be used to strengthen the link between planners and their corporate colleagues to promote local infrastructure delivery, and to strive for better co ordination of infrastructure planning activity between all spatial scales.

For a number of important reasons, such a study has never been more necessary and timely. For practitioners, effective infrastructure planning is essential to achieving an adopted Core Strategy, making progress with CIL, and addressing coalition planning reforms more generally. This study of planning practice will also provide key research evidence necessary to respond to recent academic discussion which questions the value and feasibility of spatial planning in England.

In writing to you directly, we would like to invite you to complete the questionnaire personally, and / or distribute the link to other members of your planning team who have input into the Local Development Framework for your local authority area.

The questionnaire can be accessed very easily by using the following link, which will direct you to the online questionnaire via Survey Monkey. An extensive consultation exercise has been conducted with key academic experts and local authority practitioners with direct experience of infrastructure planning, to ensure that the questionnaire has been rigorously tested. The questionnaire should take no more than 15 to 20 minutes to complete.

Questionnaire Link:- https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/InfrastructureDelivery

The invitation to participate is being extended to planners with experience of infrastructure planning in every local authority across the country through this direct approach to all Local Authority Chief Planners. The link to the questionnaire is also being advertised and promoted to planning professionals through a wide range of other initiatives in association with RTPI, TCPA, The Planning Officers Society and Communities of Practice Website throughout September. The survey can be followed electronically via:- **twitter.com/VivienHolt** and **http://vivien-holt.blogspot.com**

The deadline for returning questionnaires is the end of September to allow sufficient time for the link to be distributed to other planning officers in the authority. Your co operation and input into this survey is valued and appreciated and will help to construct an informed overview of the practitioner experience of local infrastructure planning in England.

If you wish to receive a complementary summary of the survey results in appreciation of your input, please provide a contact address, when prompted, whilst completing the questionnaire.

If you require any further information, I would be pleased to discuss any aspect of this study with you via email or by telephone.

APPENDIX 5

STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEW QUESTIONS (PHASE 1)

1. How are you organised operationally for responding to LPAs across the region concerning Local Development Frameworks?

2. How do local authority planners engage with you in formulating local plan documents / concerning the actual implementation?

i. What sort of data have they been asking for / got from you?. Do you think they are able to use that data effectively to inform their local plans?

ii. Do you think that planner engagement has been a tick box exercise to get the LPA through the examination process?

iii. What sort of 1:1 interaction is there at present and what are the prospects for a good quality long term engagement process between your organisation and invidual LPAs in the north west

iv. Have you noticed any changes in the way the LPAs consult and work with you or in their culture since 2008

v. Are you anticipating any escalation in demand for information from planners in the light of the National Planning Policy Framework being introduced?

3. do you have contact with others departments in local authorities in addition to the Forward Planning Teams?

4. Do you work with groups of Local Authorities in combination - what are the issues, disagreements which you are picking up associated with cross boundary working?

5. Do you work collaboratively with other infrastructure providers on supplying information to local authority planners?

6. How would you sum up the philosophy which underpins the manner in which you liaise with local authority planners, is it enabling? has it changed over time?

7. Case study examples?

Appendix 6. Local Development Scheme Review - North West Local Authorities (page 1)				
North West Council	**CS Adoption**	**Site Allocations Consultation Period**	**Site Allocations DPD Adoption**	**Latest LDS Review**
CHESHIRE				
Cheshire East Council	Nov 2013	Feb-March 2014	Dec 2014	
Cheshire West & Chester Council	Late 2014	Delayed from May 2012		
Halton Borough Council	Autumn 2012	Autumn 2012		
Warrington Borough Council	Feb 2013	Feb-March 2013	Dec 2013	
CUMBRIA				
Allerdale Borough Council	July 2013	September 2013	Jan 2015	June 2012
Copeland Borough Council	Dec 2012	Jan-Feb 2013	March 2014	March 2012
Barrow in Furness BC	April 2012	March 2012	March 2013	July 2010
Carlisle Council	Feb 2014	Sept 2014	Oct 2015	2011
Eden District Council	March 2010	Jan 2011	March 2012 (not confirmed)	June 2010
South Lakeland District Council	Oct 2010	Feb-March 2012 (slipped)	Oct 2012	2012

Appendix 6. Local Development Scheme Review - North West Local Authorities (page 2)				
North West Council	**CS Adoption**	**Site Allocations Consultation Period**	**Site Allocations DPD Adoption**	**Latest LDS Review**
GREATER MANCHESTER				
Bolton Met Borough Council	March 2011	March 2009- July 2012	Sept 2013	July 2011
Bury Met Borough Council	resubmitted March 2013	Delayed due to resubmission	Delayed from Autumn 2012	March 2009
Manchester City Council	11th July 2012	June 2012	Dec 2013	Feb 2012
Oldham Met Borough Council	Nov 2011	Oct-Nov 2013	Sept 2014	Feb 2012
Rochdale Met Borough Council	withdrawn 18th April 2012	Unspecified	Unspecified	Nov 2009
Salford City Council	August Sept 2012	to be confirmed	to be confirmed	Feb 2012
Stockport Met Borough Council	17th March 2011	July 2012	June 2013	March 2012
Tameside Met Borough Council	May 2013	May-Nov 2013	June 2015	May 2011
Trafford Met Borough	Jan 2012	Oct 2012	August 2014	Nov 2010
Wigan Council	suspended for 6 months from 24th May 2012	unspecified (IDP August 2011)		Dec 2011

Appendix 6. Local Development Scheme Review - North West Local Authorities (page 3)				
North West Council	**CS Adoption**	**Site Allocations Consultation**	**Site Allocations DPD Adoption**	**LDS Review**
LANCASHIRE				
Blackburn with Darwen BC	27 Jan 2011	Jan-Oct 2011	Nov 2013	Feb 2010
Blackpool Borough Council	public consultation May 2012		originally specified as July 2012	March 2007
Burnley Borough Council	unable to access website data			
Chorley Borough Council	Nov 2011	Jan- Feb 2012	Dec 2012	March 2011
South Ribble Council	Nov 2011	March-April 2012	Feb 2013	March 2011
Preston Council	Nov 2011	March-April 2012	Feb 2013	March 2011
Fylde Borough Council	Dec 2014	unspecified	unspecified	unspecified
Hyndburn Borough Council	March 2012	March-May 2012	Sept 2013	April 2011
Lancaster City Council	July 2008	July-Aug 2011	Aug 2012	April 2010
Pendle Borough Council	consultation Oct/Nov 2012	Summer 2013	unspecified	July 2012
Ribble Valley Borough Council	Nov 2012	unspecified	unspecified	Feb 2011
Rossendale Borough Council	8 Nov 2011	Jan 2012-Sept 2013	Dec 2014	March 2012

Appendix 6. Local Development Scheme Review - North West Local Authorities (page 4)				
North West Council	**CS Adoption**	**Site Allocations Consultation**	**Site Allocations DPD Adoption**	**LDS Review**
West Lancashire Borough Council	July 2013	water utilities IDP 2012		June 2012
Wyre Borough Council	July 2014	call for sites July 2012	July 2016	originally 2007
MERSEYSIDE				
Knowsley Met Borough Council	June 2013	July-Sept 2013	March 2015	Jan 2012
Liverpool City Council	examination Nov 2011 consultation May 2012	delayed	delayed	July 2009
Sefton Council	April 2014	infrastructure study undertaken 2011	unspecified	unspecified
St Helens Met Borough Council	Sept 2012	Feb 2013	Feb 2015	19th March 2011
Wirral Met Borough Council	August 2013	March-April 2014	August 2015	13 Feb 2012

(Source: Author)