Strategic Planning
for
Regional Development

TCPA
Strategic Planning Group
Campaign for Strategic Planning
# Strategic Planning for Regional Development

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Foreword

The Town and Country Planning Association is committed to two major principles which it believes must permeate all effective planning for the development of a better living environment. First, there should be more active involvement by local communities in defining what qualities their local areas should have in the future and in shaping any new development towards these ends. Second, there must be a long-range strategy for the future development of the wider region, to provide a reliable framework for taking decisions on major development proposals affecting much larger areas than single communities. These two approaches have often been mistakenly thought of as opposites. In reality, they are complementary, since neither can be successful in the longer run unless properly integrated with the other.

The pioneering work of Ebenezer Howard was not just about building attractive and efficient Garden Cities; it was also about their contribution to structuring of whole city regions to provide better living conditions for the residents of all areas, old and new.

Unfortunately the planning system we now have functions at some mid-point between the two principles, not satisfying either very well. Much of the work of the Association for many years has been devoted to advocating changes in the system, either to facilitate greater community involvement (strengthening the 'bottom-up' approach) or to develop more effective regional planning strategies.

This report by the Strategic Planning Group is the next step in the Campaign for Strategic Planning started by the Association in 1990 in pursuit of the second of these principles. There have been valuable contributions from all members of the Group over an extended period, and the report has now been approved by the TCPA Council for publication as a statement of the Association’s current views on strategic planning and regional government. That does not mean that there is unanimous support within the Association for all the detailed proposals. Any set of proposals for radical change is hardly likely to achieve unanimity. But there is a sufficiently strong consensus about the proposals as a whole to warrant a statement saying in effect: “These are our views, deliberately focussed on the practical details of the content of regional strategies and how to implement them. Please let us have yours, so that we can refine them and help to promote the necessary changes.”

Any such report involves both a group effort and an individual responsibility. Someone must do the drafting, incorporate group comments and write the final document. It is only right that I should acknowledge my personal responsibility, since that role became mine and the detailed form and content of the present document inevitably reflects that fact. I can only hope that the way I have chosen to express the group’s views does them full justice, and will generate some constructive contributions from others.

The Association’s objective is clear. We want to generate a widespread and active debate among all those concerned about the effectiveness of our planning system, with a view to developing a sufficient consensus about the need for regional development strategies that the necessary political changes will be made. We intend to go on with our campaign, with further conferences and seminars and publications, all aimed at testing and firming up the practical implementation of our proposals. But to be effective, we need your response.

R. M. Rookwood  
Chairman  
TCPA Council  
December 1992
Acknowledgement

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Introduction

1. In July 1990 the Town and Country Planning Association took the first public step in launching its Campaign for Strategic Planning with the publication of a discussion paper The People and the Land: Strategic Planning for the Future. Its stated purpose was to argue the need for strategic planning at the regional level and to stimulate debate about the most appropriate form for making it effective. This was followed by a discussion paper by Bill Luttrell: Regional Revival and Strategic Planning.

2. Since then, a special working group has continued to develop ideas about the objectives and content of regional development strategies, and about the governmental and financial arrangements that would be needed to prepare and to implement them. This paper is the result of that work, containing the Association's conclusions which we hope will lead to positive contributions from others of a kind that could form the basis for governmental action broadly along the lines we are proposing.

3. There are few issues of greater importance for the future of this country. The revival of the national economy depends on mobilizing under-used resources and energizing a multitude of local initiatives within some agreed broad strategy appropriate for each region. The quality of our living environment, removing the degradation that still afflicts too many, and responding to the growing demands for global sustainability, also requires a strategy that is regionally sound but locally sensitive. The health of our society, in terms of active democratic participation in the decisions that affect all our futures, reducing alienation and apathy, and generating the satisfactions that come from working together for the common good, also requires a strategic framework in which current decisions can be seen as steps towards longer-term goals.

4. Such strategic thinking is conspicuously lacking in our present arrangements. It is inhibited by our over-centralized system of government in which too many decision-makers are too remote from the areas and the people most affected. It is undermined by the comparative weakness and fragmentation of local government too subservient to, and too isolated from, the main centres of power both governmental and financial. It is actively prevented by the short-termism that is endemic in our budgetary and investment processes.

5. We have no doubt that these damaging flaws will only be eliminated by creating suitable machinery for making crucial development decisions at a regional level, more responsive to the differing regional needs and priorities than central government can be, and taking a broader and longer term view than individual businesses or local governments find possible. We believe that the evidence is clear, and the results all around us, that our present governmental structures have proved incapable of the longer-term thinking and strategic direction that are so urgently needed if we are to solve today's problems and meet tomorrow's demands. We believe equally that only at the regional level can this crucial lack be made good. And since regions are of such importance in the European Community, there are good reasons for thinking that such regional structures will in any case be valuable for participating in EC policymaking and regional funding in the future.

6. This paper sets out the reasoning and philosophy on which our Campaign for Strategic Planning is based, our proposals for the content of regional strategies, and our proposals for regional government to prepare and implement them. The recommendations would require important changes in the powers and practices of both central and local government, and will therefore only be possible after the kind of debate that we hope this paper will help to stimulate. We are sure that the results would be highly beneficial to the more effective functioning of both these existing levels, as well as creating a more encouraging and efficient framework for business investment.

7. We are of course not alone in talking about a regional level of government, and we take this as a good sign that the timing is opportune. There are two respects however in which our proposals have a different emphasis. The first is that our central purpose is to achieve the strategic planning for future development that is now lacking at any existing level of government, either central or local. The second is that our 'regional level' is not the re-introduction of a second level of local government contrary to the present moves towards unitary local authorities (ULAs); it is the creation of a new level of a different kind, intermediate between local and central, with its powers and resources derived principally by devolution from central government (on the principle of subsidiarity which calls for decision-making at the lowest level consistent with effective operation), and with objectives limited to those essential for its strategic planning role. This is emphatically not our contribution to the re-organization of local government, our objectives being fundamentally different, and we believe much more important.
8. Nevertheless there are very important relationships between any changes at the local and the regional levels which must be considered. It may be that the clarification of functions and responsibilities achieved by creating a single tier of local government would also help clarify the need for a different level of government capable of effective strategic planning. This is not an argument however for proceeding with the creation of unitary local authorities now, leaving the regional strategic authorities to be set up at some later date. Apart from the dismay and disruption that would be caused by two successive reorganizations, it needs to be recognized that there are strong reasons why the two changes should be linked. Firstly the creation of unitary local authorities, likely to be smaller and weaker than many existing counties, is most likely to reduce the already limited strategic work of the present counties. Secondly, and equally serious, without an effective regional framework any move towards ULAs would inevitably result in increasingly centralized government and a further diminution of local democracy. Both of these are sufficient reasons for saying that the introduction of ULAs without regional government should be strongly opposed.

9. We believe that the first priority is to provide the strategic planning capacity at regional level, tailoring any local government changes to fit in with this. Provided that this was done, we believe that a combination of (a) ULAs providing local services with (b) regional government providing the strategic framework for future development, would result in a huge improvement in the effectiveness of government in the UK at all levels, and in its democratic accountability.

10. Clearly such changes would take several years to complete, although we see no reason why adding the regional dimension need extend the lengthy period currently envisaged for the changes now in train for local government. In the meantime, some useful progress could be made towards more effective regional planning by strengthening the changes already proposed by the government in 1989 and subsequently - namely that the counties (as structure plan authorities) should all contribute actively to the preparation of advice to the Secretary of State on regional development policies - provided that the regional guidance which follows makes more use of the detailed advice submitted than has been the practice until now. While being an improvement on the present situation, however, this would still fall far short of what is really needed, as set out in the remainder of this paper.
The Case for Strategic Planning

1. The United Kingdom has an unprecedented range of major land use and environmental challenges to face as we approach the second millennium. We have had a system of town and country planning since the 1940s that has provided a basic framework within which we make local decisions about current and future development. When dealing with purely local issues this system has proved remarkably successful. But many of the decisions that most affect the quality of our lives are determined not locally, but regionally or nationally. Since their effects are generally widespread and long-lasting, it has long been recognized that some broader strategic framework was needed to ensure their effective coordination. But all the attempts so far to do this have proved either short-lived (e.g. the economic planning councils and boards), too limited in scope (e.g. major transport decisions nearly always handled quite separately), or too limited in powers to be more than just advisory (e.g. the regional groupings of local planning authorities). The kind of longer-term strategy needed to coordinate these major developments and to integrate them constructively with local development plans is still not part of our development planning system. Something more permanent and systematic is needed.

2. This paper assumes throughout that the Regional Development Strategy, while having broad objectives which are social and economic and environmental, nevertheless is concerned with the physical (and the related financial) means for achieving them. This puts a useful limit to the sphere of action, influencing for example the scale and location of new industrial or educational or health facilities but clearly not getting involved in their operating budgets. The advantage in terms of practicality, and political acceptability, is that 'development' is of the kind envisaged by the original town and country planning acts and the procedures evolved in that connection, but freed of the narrow 'land use' limits imposed by the DoE, and strengthened by much better provision for effective implementation and for initiating rather than mainly reacting to the initiatives of others, and by the necessary financial resources for that purpose.

3. The need for genuine strategic land use and development planning has never been greater in Britain. Strategic issues and developments which are strategic in nature abound. We have a continuing north-south divide; we have unbalanced decentralization from our cities; we have persistent inner city problems; we have major pressures on the countryside; and we have a range of serious problems threatening the natural environment. Numerous developments — all of them of major strategic significance — are taking place or planned which may either resolve or exacerbate these problems. But the broad policy framework for rationalizing them so as to optimize their benefits and minimize their detrimental effects is missing.

4. We only need to think about some of the individual, urgent issues that we hear about daily to realize that some strategic thinking and planning of their collective outcomes is essential:

   a) The Channel Tunnel is nearing completion but the infrastructure needed to connect it to all parts of Britain is still undecided, much less under construction.

   b) A high-speed link (for passengers but not freight) has been belatedly accepted as necessary in the public interest, but the project is denied public funds.

   c) Airport expansion has been forced on locations in the south, adding to environmental and congestion problems there, when it would be welcomed in the north and serve other regional development objectives at the same time.

   d) The requirement to release more land for housing is being forced upon many localities in the wider public interest, yet planning permissions are being refused by local planning authorities for narrow but understandable local reasons.

   e) We are planning for more jobs in some places but for no more homes nearby (and vice versa) thus adding to living costs and environmental problems.

   f) We are creating patterns of development that are not sustainable in the longer term, because of their excessive requirements for energy and permanent long-distance journeys to work.

5. In summary, our present planning activity is not geared to handle the big issues we feel to be in urgent need of resolution. A glance at mainland Europe is a salutary experience: most other EC nations make serious commitments of time and resources to strategic planning. The results - perhaps most conspicuously in the Ile de France region centred on Paris - show how dynamic, imaginative and creative this process can be. The UK in this regard is out of step with the rest of
Europe. We believe that the case for strategic planning in this country is irrefutable.

6. Not surprisingly, we are not alone in that view.

"Local choice cannot mean people trying to plan behind a moat, it cannot mean trying to plan without taking account of the rest of their region and the rest of the country ..." (Christopher Patten, Secretary of State for the Environment, speaking on Public Eye, BBC2 18, May 1990.)

"How, after the Foxley Wood decision, is the pressure going to be eased to London's southwest, along and around the M3 and M4 motorways? Fuelled by defence spending, this is the electronics area. Unemployment is nil. Should the only answer be to tack more and more suburbs onto the edge of Reading and more executive housing onto the fringes of Berkshire and Hampshire villages? Is our imagination at such a low ebb?" (Paul Barker, The Independent, 9 October 1989.)

"Of course, we are all well aware that local communities have to be realistic. They cannot just veto all new developments in their areas. They have to play a sensible part in meeting the wider needs of the country. To do that in sensible planning at the local level, they must have a strategic framework within which to make their choices." (Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for the Environment, Hansard, 13 March 1990, Col. 1533.)

7. The question remains as to how that strategic framework is to be achieved and made effective, especially bearing in mind the failure of previous attempts.

"In the 1970s, the Strategic Plan for the Northwest was produced, which placed the 'Mersey Belt' at the heart of its policies. There has been no update or revision of that strategy since then, but the region's problems have not diminished — indeed, there is today an even greater need for some form of regional strategy or planning mechanism. For too long the North West has stumbled along without an effective local authority regional voice at Westminster or Brussels, and key strategic issues have gone uncoordinated and decisions taken in isolation." (Report of the Greater Manchester Chief Planning Officers Group to the Association of Greater Manchester Authorities (AGMA) Joint Planning and Countryside Committee, 12 March 1990.)

8. The situation in the North West is typical of the rest of the country, and the government's recent extension of the regional guidance system falls far short of what is needed, having neither the detailed content nor the implementation powers to be of much practical effect.

9. Previous attempts to organize planning at the strategic scale in Britain have fallen away in recent decades. There never was a 'golden age' in which there was adequate strategic planning, but from time to time institutions and organizations have been created for that purpose, giving hope that a more satisfactory system would evolve. However, all have been dismantled or starved of resources, and most of the structures and arrangements that facilitated some strategic planning have disappeared. During the last decade, the regional economic planning councils have been abolished; the metropolitan authorities have been abolished; structure plans have been reduced in status, and have been scheduled for abolition (though at present reappraised, they are now threatened by the proposals for replacing counties - the structure plan authorities - and districts by unitary local authorities); and no regional plans have been produced.

10. The result is a localization of planning and a neglect of the very strategic issues that most influence our economic efficiency and our quality of life. We cannot seriously address questions, for example, of urban pressures on the countryside, of inner city decline, of global warming, or of massive traffic congestion, only by focussing on localities. The sum of localized decisions, whether by local governments or by individual businesses, only accidentally produces desirable outcomes at a more strategic level.

11. What is required is the integration of local knowledge and choice with strategic assessment and planning at the regional level. This is why the TCPA believes, as a matter of principle, that land use and environmental planning on the strategic scale is essential in any nation that seeks efficient, equitable and sustainable development of the physical environment on which the quality of life is so dependent.
The Characteristics of Strategic Regional Planning

1. Strategic planning is concerned with understanding and guiding development and change at the level of relatively large areas having some cultural and economic identity, within which major developments will serve the whole region, influencing living and working conditions well beyond any single locality or local administration. It attempts to develop that understanding and goal-oriented guidance over a wide range of important issues, taking a holistic approach (viewing them comprehensively rather than partially) and considering solutions over long time horizons. It is very much concerned with standing back from the immediacy of everyday localized events, identifying inter-relationships, and relating the individual trees to the wider wood of which they are part.

2. Planning on this broader scale allows land use and environmental issues that transcend the locality to be debated in terms of the broader forces that will largely shape them, thus permitting more practical solutions to be found. It provides a context for the detailed decisions of local authorities, and for the investment decisions of private companies and of great business corporations – many of which have their own long-term development strategies which would be enhanced by having available a more dependable regional development strategy which they could take into account. Hence, the Confederation of British Industry and the House Builders Federation have both argued forcefully the case for strategic planning. What they seek, and what all decision-makers whether public sector or private sector require, is the overall sense of direction that helps make sense of the decisions that must be taken locally today but whose effects will be felt for generations.

3. So what would be the essential characteristics of strategic planning designed to meet these very practical needs?

4. In terms of its most basic characteristics, we believe strategic planning must be:
   a) visionary as well as pragmatic
   b) aimed at long-term viability in terms of ‘sustainable development’ criteria
   c) prescriptive, not solely informative
   d) binding, not just advisory
   e) a combination of top-down and bottom-up approaches
   f) spatial, relating to specific locations
   g) practicable, in terms of politics, resources and implementation
   h) well-founded in terms of research and understanding
   i) comprehensive in coverage, but not too detailed
   j) consistent in content and application
   k) open and accountable, with wide consultation and public participation
   l) cyclical, through monitoring and review
   m) medium- and long-term in timescale.

5. The validity of each of these ‘ideal’ characteristics requires thorough debate in order to clarify the practical implications of each. We hope this paper will generate such a debate. Here we expand briefly on a few of the major characteristics.

6. Strategic planning must offer a long-term sense of direction: this requires a sense of vision. The most effective strategic plans of the past (such as Abercrombie’s Greater London Plan of 1945, or the Strategic Plan for the South East of 1970) promoted long-term structural solutions, based on a clarity of vision. Today we know that long-term vision must encompass the sustainability of the natural environment for future generations.

7. It follows that strategic planning must be prescriptive and - after due consultation - binding. Progress towards some broad vision is impossible if local vested interests can block developments essential to that vision. Thus a key test of a strategic planning agency is: can it deal with a major strategic development that is actively opposed locally, but is needed from a regional perspective? It should not be possible for implementing agencies to ignore strategic policy.

8. However, such a rule will be politically unacceptable unless strategic policies are devised in active collaboration with these implementing agencies, to ensure that they ‘own’ the results and are committed to their role in implementing them. Moreover, even at the strategic level there must be due regard for the impact of policies on local and community needs. Thus strategic planning has to combine top-down with bottom-up approaches. This applies to both policy generation and implementation.
9. Policy formulation should result from a dialogue. If skilfully handled, the result will be a consensus on strategic policies in which all concerned recognize the merits of both local aspirations and strategic appropriateness.

10. In practice this is likely to require strong political and institutional support at strategic and local levels. Strong legislative support for strategic planning is required, not just to support the activity generally, but to ensure that it is treated seriously at the local level, if effective implementation is to be achieved.

11. Whereas it is true for all plans that a plan is only as good as its implementation, this is particularly true of strategic planning. Since strategic plans by definition are wide-ranging and have a long time-scale for achieving their objectives, the difficulties about putting them into effect are especially acute. Typically, the policy-making and plan-implementing agencies are widely separated and subject to quite different current agendas. The need to retain flexibility (in response to changing circumstances and opportunities) easily obscures the need to maintain a clear sense of direction and long-term priorities extending well beyond current budgeting cycles.

12. It is for reasons of this kind that it will be important to switch the emphasis away from the pre-eminence typically given in our planning processes to policy formulation and on to a much greater emphasis on implementation: from a 'policy-dominant' to an 'implementation-dominant' approach. This implies that the policy-formulation stage in the planning cycle will need to be compressed, while more time and energy goes into understanding and putting into practice the means by which policies can be implemented.

13. There are two further points which are of critical importance for effective implementation. The first is that even at the regional strategic level, the strategic plan must be area specific, indicating clearly (short of identifying individual sites) the distribution of new developments and the areas to which particular policies or standards will apply. A set of general statements (of the kind now contained in ministerial regional guidance), with little or no reference to localities, will not suffice. Without clear guidance on what is to happen in specific areas, implementing agencies or local authorities will simply go their own way.

14. The second point which is critical for effective implementation is that strategic planning must have continuity. Strategic plans will normally contain provisions extending 15 to 25 years ahead, to be (a) implemented through short-term action programmes adapted to current opportunities and investment priorities, (b) monitored in terms of progress actually achieved towards long-term goals, and (c) revised as appropriate in relation to actual progress and changing circumstances. Without strong continuity, both political and financial, in terms of the main objectives, this essential flexibility in implementation, if carried too far, could easily result in the loss of the essential long-term objectives - i.e. in effect, collapse of strategy. The political and administrative arrangements for strategic planning must therefore be designed to minimize this risk.
Basic Principles of Strategic Regional Plans

1. The strategic plan for future regional development:
   a) should set down guidelines for local development and change designed to secure conformity with sustainable development criteria
   b) should provide a clear framework for future infrastructure investment, both public and private
   c) should coordinate between sectors in terms of scale and location of future development, providing the interdepartmental synchronization (e.g. between transport, housing, education, utilities and economic development) that has not been possible within central government
   d) should follow national guidance for achievement of national policy objectives but should be empowered to decide on regional programmes and priorities without prior ministerial approval, subject only to reserve 'call-in' powers
   e) should derive more than 50% of the operating funds directly from local or regional taxes or levies, relying on central government (and the European Community) principally for equalization purposes
   f) should have effective powers for implementing the plan, both through the allocation of funds to local authorities (or other development agencies) for development where local design and execution is important (most cases), and through direct letting of contracts in those cases where the scale or non-local nature of development makes this preferable (exceptional cases)
   g) should be prepared on the basis of regular consultation with local government, community groups and voluntary bodies, regional business interests, and regional offices of government departments, providing the means by which these varied interests can come together constructively in developing specific regional objectives and the programmes for achieving them
   h) should describe the environmental impact of its policies, programmes and specific development proposals, using a nation-wide system of environmental auditing for measuring their effects on key indicators of environmental health for the region and the nation.

2. The strategic plan should not attempt to deal with the operation of services although it may assist with the expansion of services where this is a vital component of the overall plan for future development.

3. With these essential characteristics and basic principles in mind, we now need to look in more detail at the administrative and governmental arrangements which are likely to be most effective in practice, and then at what should be the content of strategic development plans if they are to make short-term action programmes compatible with long-term vision.
Regional Government and Strategic Development Agencies

1. The present distribution of powers and responsibilities between central and local government in Britain does not provide for the effective preparation, or implementation, of regional development strategies of the kind just described. The units of local government are too small in area and too limited in powers. Central government is too remote, has different functions and operating methods, and has proved unable to develop the longer-term continuity in financing or inter-departmental coordination that are essential for strategic thinking and management. The consortia (conferences) of local planning authorities are limited by the narrow 'land use' interpretation of town and country planning insisted upon by the Department of Environment, and in any case can only offer advice to Secretaries of State who have consistently so far refused to use most of the detailed advice offered.

2. In order to achieve effective regional development strategies of the kind we have described, it is essential that there should be regional authorities with sufficient powers and resources to enable them to prepare and also to secure the implementation of such strategies. In order to operate efficiently these authorities will need to cooperate with both local and central government, but should be sufficiently independent of both to ensure that regional strategies are not distorted by particular local vested interests or by the endemic short-termism and lack of inter-departmental coordination characteristic of central government.

3. We believe that these criteria cannot be satisfied by setting up regional authorities composed of representatives of local authorities or appointees from the regional offices of central government. This alternative might well appeal to those who are beginning to recognize the need for regional-level decisions but are unwilling to consider any radical change from the present allocation of powers to either the local or the central level. However we do not believe that merely re-arranging how the present functions of central and local government are performed would be sufficient.

4. We believe that there is a vitally necessary level of government mid-way between the two existing levels which is missing in this country and which needs to be created. We are strengthened in this belief by the knowledge that other countries in the European Community which have regional government have been successful in setting up regional development strategies of the kind we are advocating. The growing importance of regions in EC policy-making and allocation of EC funds gives added weight to our arguments, but the need would exist in any case.

5. In order to provide this new level of decision-making and administration, for the purpose of performing strategic functions which now go by default because they are peripheral to the existing operations of both central and local government, we believe there is no practical alternative to directly-elected regional authorities with largely independent sources of funds for the performance of their principal strategic development functions. To operate effectively, they will need to have the following main characteristics:
   a) be as representative as possible of the various political groups within the region through some form of proportional representation, to facilitate policy continuity
   b) have formal arrangements for consulting and involving both local and central government in the formulation of regional development strategies
   c) be subject to electoral arrangements that are conducive to the longer-range thinking and continuity of development policies that are essential for effective strategic work, e.g. by having one-half of the members of the regional assembly stand for election every two years, with four years as the normal term of office
   d) have obligatory procedures for consulting and involving both the public and the major development agencies in the region in the formulation of both long-term strategies and short-term development programmes
   e) have clearly-defined powers and responsibilities, distinguishing these from those of both local and central government, so as to avoid the overlaps which have sometimes inhibited good relations, efficiency and accountability within the present two-tier system of local government
   f) be limited in its functions and responsibilities to:
      1) the preparation and implementation of the Regional Development Strategy as described later in this paper, and
      2) any additional functions devolved to it by agreement from other regional bodies
   g) have clearly-defined arrangements for liaison with existing regional bodies (e.g. in health, sport and arts) and for consulting and involving them in the formulation of longer-term

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strategies and shorter-term development and investment programmes.

6. At present we have effectively four levels of government: central, quasi-regional, county and district. The quasi-regional level is not democratically accountable, and exercises its powers indirectly: in the case of regional offices of government departments, by having certain liaison and negotiating responsibilities allocated to them but with overall control and major decisions retained at the centre; in the case of regional consortia of local planning authorities, by influencing their member authorities by their joint work on policy issues, and by influencing the Secretary of State through their formal advice on regional planning guidance. They have no direct fund-raising powers, and their ability in practice to influence spending programmes is limited.

7. Our proposal is for only three levels, but each democratically elected, each with clearly defined powers and responsibilities, and each with substantial financial independence so that there is clarity of function, and open accountability. Some overlaps of responsibility and conflicts of interest will undoubtedly still occur; in reality they cannot be totally eliminated, and in any case they form the practical links between levels on which understanding and partnership arrangements depend. But the clearer separation of functions and greater financial independence will reduce the extent of these inevitable 'overlaps' and make them easier to manage.

8. This new simplified structure would provide not only greater public accountability, but also would facilitate the making of effective arrangements between private development bodies and public development agencies. Such arrangements are bound to be of increasing importance as European integration proceeds, with its growing emphasis on coordinated action to correct imbalances in regional investment, with both government and private industry having important complementary roles to play.

9. Under our proposals, a substantial number of existing regional special-purpose authorities would continue as at present including, for example, the regional health authorities and the recently privatized water companies.

10. Also continuing, at least initially, would be development agencies such as the Welsh Development Agency, whose work is essentially the implementation of specific development projects, rather than the formulation of comprehensive long-term regional development strategies. This is not to suggest that they have not done any strategic thinking, in the absence of any strategic plan above the county ‘structure plan’ level, but their primary purpose and essential operating methods have been different.

11. Our reasons for making these exclusions are as follows:

a) our principal purpose is to provide effective government machinery to fill a major gap in our existing structures, not to re-organize existing functions.

b) the difficult and unfamiliar job of developing strategic planning processes is unlikely to succeed unless kept free of other tasks not essential for that purpose.

c) strategies are best prepared by small integrated multi-disciplinary teams, not by large bureaucracies which too easily become complex and cumbersome.

d) the fresh thinking that is needed should not be clouded or distracted by the complications of taking over existing operational structures.

12. Having said that, it will be important, in fact vitally important, to establish the right kind of working relationship between the new slimline regional governments and these existing regional agencies. They will have an important contribution to make in the formulation of the regional development strategy strategy, and they will have major roles in its implementation. The legislation establishing the new regional governments will have to require them to set up the appropriate working relationships, with corresponding changes in other legislation requiring the existing agencies to cooperate in an active and constructive way.

13. The way regional development funds are channelled in future will of course have an important bearing on these working relationships. Detailed proposals on financing are made later. For the moment it is sufficient to note that the regional governments as proposed would have substantial revenues independent of the Treasury, and that the principal authority for the allocation of major regional development funds for projects implementing the regional strategy would in future be the regional government. The exact form of the future working relationships would have to reflect such changes in financing, but these would apply only to those projects integral to the implementation of the regional strategy, and would not apply to the current on-going work of these agencies. Clearly there are important details which could only be worked out with the direct participation of the agencies concerned. What is important at this stage is to establish the principles outlined briefly in paragraphs 9 to 11 above.

14. The relationship between regional strategies and national policies also will need to be worked out. It is simple enough in some respects to require that regional strategies must conform to, and give practical effect to, national policies and objectives, with the Minister having reserve ‘call-in’ powers to ensure compliance. However, to achieve a satisfactory ‘fit’ between the strategies of adjoining regions may require more than bi-lateral negotiation on contentious matters; and to make sure that the sum total of regional strategies produces a satisfactory result for the nation as a whole will require some kind of national coordinating.
machinery. Some kind of 'forum of the regions' on which central government is also represented may be the best solution. This would maintain the partnership approach which is so important, with the regions as a group having the primary responsibility for sorting out their differences, and central government maintaining the overall national interest through its allocation of national funds, either for helping to correct regional imbalances or for funding developments which remain government responsibilities.
Content of Regional Strategies for Future Development

1. It may be thought that we already have good models from which we could simply derive a summary of the essential ingredients. For instance, if we took the London Planning Advisory Committee (LPAC) advice to the Secretary of State on the strategy for London (which is the most thoroughly worked out example we have) and added various non-metropolitan elements from the corresponding documents from other regions, we would seem to have a solid model for our proposals, based on past experience and current attitudes.

2. Although we do need to build on this experience, there are a number of reasons for thinking that it may be inadequate or incomplete:

   a) these advisory strategies were prepared by joint consultative bodies inhibited by having to avoid any proposals likely to provoke strong opposition by any individual member, to a much greater extent than would be necessary in a regional authority with its own powers

   b) a regional authority with its own decision-making and implementation powers, and resources, would need to place much greater emphasis on programmes and priorities for ensuring implementation, possibly affecting the plan content as well

   c) our regional strategies in Britain will need to have greater regard for the effects of European integration and for the way that European physical planning policy is evolving, with its emphasis on counteracting regional disadvantage

   d) regional strategies from now on will have to incorporate ‘sustainable development’ objectives which are likely to require profound changes in the time-horizons of plans and in the cross-sectoral integration of proposals (e.g. for home and workplace, for transport and land use) in relation to environmental impacts

   e) the regional ‘advice’ documents have all been prepared in the knowledge of the Department of Environment’s excessively narrow interpretation of ‘land use planning’; although some regional conferences (notably LPAC) seem not to have been much deterred by this, a broader remit would produce somewhat different results

3. To be acceptable politically, and to be understood by the public, the creation of a new level of decision-making must be clearly distinguishable from the two-tier system of local government which now seems likely to be dismantled. For this reason, the regional development plan:

   a) must have a clear ‘coordinating and enabling’ focus, providing a framework for, but not overlapping, local authority responsibilities

   b) must constitute a well-defined bridge between central and local government, which must be apparent in its formulation and in its execution, both of these affecting its content

   c) should only be as broad as is essential for the achievement of defined regional objectives, underpinning rather than supplanting local authority and private investment

4. It would be a fatal mistake to obscure the main aim of achieving an effective strategic framework by making the strategic authority’s responsibilities too all-embracing, thereby encroaching on existing local or national responsibilities. If the regional strategy achieves the backing and the status it requires for success, the programmes of other agencies will have their own independent contributions to make, without over-complicating the main strategic development plan.

5. If we are to give effective implementation much greater prominence as a major component of the regional strategy, this will of course affect the format and the presentation (and therefore political and public perceptions), but might well also affect the content. The more the strategy is about what the region will do itself, as distinct from what it is proposing that others should do, the more clout it is likely to have. If it has major funds to deploy, either for its own development (e.g. for regional transport networks) or for development by others (e.g. additional funds to make good regional deficiencies in education, housing and health), the strategy will be more in the nature of an action programme and less of a long-term vision. While wanting to maintain a good balance between the two, credibility will accrue faster if action gets the spotlight.

6. In this connection, the strategic development plan for the region - having social, economic and environmental objectives but implemented through a physical development plan - would need to give equal prominence to a financial plan (i.e. a long-term investment strategy) and to a physical plan (i.e. the strategy for creating an improved living and working environment), both of course having short-term action programmes.
7. Apart from its intrinsic importance for effective implementation, the financial plan would be a valuable input to the European Community "for assessing structural improvement programmes and measures and determining the need for a corresponding increase in and regulation of Community funding". (Para 2.3 of Opinion of the Economic and Social Committee on Europe 2000, dated 25 September 1991.)

8. Also relevant to the EC context is the comment: "From the standpoint of a Community physical planning policy, this principle (of subsidiarity) means that the Member States, and in particular their regions, are to retain political and financial responsibility for the formulation and implementation of development policies, with regional powers and financial resources being increased where necessary." (Para 2.7, ibid.)

9. This section contains a summary of our proposals for the content of regional development strategies, focusing attention on the main essentials. It should be read in conjunction with the two later sections on 'Powers and Resources for Implementing Regional Strategy' and 'The Process of Regional Strategic Planning'. The three aspects - process, plan and implementation - are inseparable, and it is on the successful interaction of the three that the achievement of an improved living and working environment will depend.

10. The Regional Development Strategy should consist of six parts, plus appendices:

Part One: Objectives for future development
Part Two: Long-term plan for physical development and environmental protection
Part Three: Long-term financial investment strategy
Part Four: Short-term development programme, physical and financial
Part Five: Criteria for monitoring and review
Part Six: Environmental impact statement
Appendices: 1) Results of consultation
            2) Implications for implementation by different agencies
            3) Schedule of non-financial resource requirements.

PART ONE: OBJECTIVES FOR FUTURE DEVELOPMENT

1. These will be social, economic and environmental, identifying the contribution that physical development can make. They will be based on analysis of existing conditions and needs, coupled with existing and anticipated trends. They will draw much of this material, both facts and aspirations, from the consultation with their constituent local authorities, from other development agencies both public and private, and from the regional offices of central government departments.

2. So far as the latter are concerned, only experience is likely to show whether the practice of preparing and implementing long-term development strategies for the various regions will result in, or be paralleled by, some longer-term national development policies. It seems inevitable that this should happen in certain fields at least, and the existence of effective machinery for implementation at regional level should make this a more politically acceptable concept than it has proved to be in the past. In terms of present thinking, some long-term national policies for future development in fields such as environmental protection, energy, transport and the north-south divide are clearly needed in their own right, as well as to form the national framework for regional development strategies.

3. In other fields it may be adequate, in fact preferable, to leave policy entirely to the regional level. Housing is probably the outstanding example. Urgent although reducing the national shortage of over three million dwellings undoubtedly is, it is arguable that both current action and long-term objectives are best left to the regional and local levels, given their new powers and resources. Apart from any other advantage, the relief to the overcrowded national policy agenda would be considerable.

4. At the other end of the spectrum, all of the issues implicit in the concept of sustainable development - with its world-wide implications - clearly call for stable long-term national objectives which will strongly affect regional strategies.

5. In our over-centralized unitary state the whole idea of major areas of public policy being left to the regional level will initially seem strange to many. However in the interests of more efficient government, more effective democratic control, and more active local community involvement, the principle of subsidiarity needs to be widely applied. The fact that not all of the long-term objectives are imposed from above means that the process of reaching some broad consensus, region by region, will require the growth of a stronger sense of regional identity, which should naturally come as each region becomes aware of the potential in the new allocation of powers for determining its own distinctive future.

6. The objectives for future development of the region should have the following characteristics:

a) they should be limited to those requiring action at the regional level to achieve them

b) they should distinguish between long-term and short-term, indicating relative priorities for action

c) they should be so defined as to be capable of forming the targets for the physical and financial plans

d) they should be formulated so as to be suitable for building in to the monitoring process as yardsticks for measuring progress
e) they should provide for long-term continuity extending well beyond the life of current action programmes, creating a widely understood sense of direction capable of surviving changes in political control and the necessary opportunism of short-term programmes.

PART TWO : LONG-TERM PLAN FOR PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT AND ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

1. In terms of strategic priorities, even long-term plans can be expected to differ from region to region, reflecting differences in local needs and opportunities, traditions and ambitions.

2. The need to be comprehensive regarding the strategic essentials must be constrained by the need to avoid over-complicating the strategic level, especially in the early formative years when the regional level needs to establish its distinctive role vis-a-vis central and local government. It will therefore be important to avoid extraneous matters which will detract from development of an effective process linking current programmes to future vision.

3. With these considerations in mind, we believe that the strategic essentials for most regions will include the following:

a) the broad distribution of population and employment down to areas of approximately 100,000 population, i.e. the level of one or two districts

b) the scale and location of major new housing and new settlements

c) the scale and location of principal new employment and traffic generators

d) how housing and employment growth are to be balanced

e) a coordinated strategy for linking urban renewal with 'green field' development, so as to balance improvements in housing condition and residential environment throughout the region

f) the location of major existing, new, or to be expanded infrastructure, e.g. airport and port facilities, motorways and railways, energy installations, etc.

g) integrated transport planning, giving due priority to environmental impacts, public transport and rail investment

h) promoting and assisting investment and enterprise in key locations having either special needs or special potential for economic development

i) improving the availability of both affordable housing and job opportunities appropriate to local incomes and local skills, correcting regional imbalances

j) safeguarding the natural environment and controlling pollution

k) policies for rural land use, development and employment relative to changes in agriculture, food production, and patterns of urban development

l) waste management and recycling

m) mineral resource management.

4. In selecting this list of what we believe will constitute the essential core of an effective regional development strategy, we have tried to avoid matters which are best decided and organized locally, as well as those which are more appropriately questions of national policy and action. There is undoubtedly, for example, a regional development dimension to both education and health. However the principal responsibilities for these will be some combination of national policy and local implementation. Any implications for regional strategy will have to be taken into account by the regional authority, as part of the context for its work, and it may be that eventually there will be a demand for funds which are now allocated centrally to be allocated regionally. But in order to avoid over-complicating the new regional structures, the primary locus - at least initially - for both policy and action should remain elsewhere.

5. An essential pre-requisite for preparing such strategic plans is the availability of up-to-date statistical information on basic matters such as population, employment, income levels, housing condition, vehicle ownership and movements, and retailing patterns. Because of the rapid pace of change in our highly urbanized society, it is of critical importance for the proper deployment of public and private investment that such information is readily available and up-dated often enough to indicate current conditions. In particular there should be a national census every five years, possibly with alternate censuses on a sample basis as was done in 1966, but with accelerated processing and wide availability at an early date of the key indicators of change.

6. In addition, in order to provide a baseline against which to measure environmental impact, there will need to be a regional environmental audit, as part of a nationwide system of environmental auditing. Because of the critical nature of the threats to the natural environment, no long-term development strategy can be considered viable unless there is up-to-date information available on the key indicators of environmental health against which proposals can be judged.
PART THREE: LONG-TERM FINANCIAL INVESTMENT STRATEGY

1. It is vitally important that strategic planning for future regional development should be able to mobilize the resources necessary for its implementation. The new level of administration must quickly demonstrate its practical effectiveness as a helpful partner to other administrations, and as a reliable guide and adjunct to other investors both private and public, if it is to gain the political and popular recognition necessary for survival.

2. The regional development plan will differ from traditional local development plans in being proactive rather than reactive, initiating or actively facilitating needed development rather than waiting for development proposals by others to be submitted for approval. The balance between 'plan' and 'implementation' will therefore be significantly different.

3. It is reasonable to think that this greater emphasis on executive action will be more pronounced in the short-term programmes than in the long-term plans. However without a long-term financial strategy to provide the necessary continuity and reasonable confidence about future prospects, the whole concept of being able to move, step by step but in a coordinated and purposeful way, towards certain future goals would degenerate yet again into short-term 'ad hoc-ery'.

4. The aim of the financial strategy is to quantify and to indicate the proposed use of the resources likely to be available, giving broad orders of magnitude as the long-range context for the greater detail of the short-term implementation programmes.

5. It is important therefore that the long-term physical plan should be accompanied by a long-term financial plan for ten to twenty years ahead, containing the following principal elements:

a) proposed major developments, indicating broadly location, phasing and approximate costs, by private developers, public utilities, local authorities, government agencies, and the Regional Development Corporation(s) - see Section 6 below

b) arrangements for assembly and disposal of development sites, including provisions for compensation and betterment

c) assumptions regarding availability of funds, including, \textit{inter alia}, regional taxes (see Section 6 below), regional borrowing, government grants, and European Community regional and structural programmes

d) broad financial inputs and returns on investment, including full allowance for returns over the life-time of projects using new 'sustainable development' accounting rules.

6. Since this kind of long-term financial quantification will be new, especially to public authorities, new procedures and techniques will no doubt have to be developed, drawing on private sector expertise but adapted to the new investment framework that will exist.

PART FOUR: SHORT-TERM DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME, PHYSICAL AND FINANCIAL

1. It is not an exaggeration, nor a contradiction in terms, to say that the real crux in terms of effectiveness of the long-term strategy lies even more in the short-term action programme than in the long-term plan. The action programme is an essential element in putting the plan into operation.

2. This is not to imply that the action programme is the only, or even the most important, means of implementing the plan; if the strategy is being effective it will be used as the framework for development and investment decisions by most of the significant developers in the region. However there is little chance of the various developers using the strategic framework in this way unless there is solid evidence of effective action at all levels to implement it. The action programme of the regional authority must provide this evidence.

3. The essential characteristics of the short-term programme will include:

a) identification of top priorities for action within the plan

b) flexibility in responding to opportunities as they arise

c) facilitating the coordination of development by different agencies, making for greater efficiency through better time-tabling of design and contract work and allocation of investment funds

d) providing the basis for an information clearing-house to assist in the adjustment of individual programmes in response to the inevitable variations as they occur

e) providing the basis for annual budgeting within a three- to five-year rolling programme.

4. The content of the short-term physical development programme:

a) may in principle be the same as that of the long-term plan

b) in practice is likely at any time to include detailed proposals for only some parts of the plan, depending on current priorities and opportunities.
c) must include explicit statements of the long-term objectives for each of the proposals in the programme

d) must include criteria by which progress towards those objectives is measured.

5. The short-term financial investment programme must itself demonstrate and put into effect the strategic nature of the wider operation of which it is part, by counteringact the short-termism of current annual budgeting practices in both central and local government, which is at present such a barrier to strategic thinking. The financial programme must:

a) set out the best information currently available on the investment proposals or forward expectations of the most significant development agencies in the region for the period three to five years ahead

b) give details of the budget for the Regional Development Corporation concerning the development to be carried out by it

c) set out the financial proposals of the regional authority for enabling or assisting other developments contained in the action programme

d) provide information similar to that outlined above for the long-term financial plan but in the greater detail appropriate to the short-term programme.

PART FIVE: CRITERIA FOR MONITORING AND REVIEW

1. It is a well-known fact that, of the various stages in the planning cycle - survey, analysis, plan, implementation, monitoring (a form of re-survey) and review (a form of re-analysis), and revision of plan - it is systematic monitoring and review that is least well done, indeed least practised. There are a number of possible reasons for this, but an important factor has undoubtedly been that when development plans become more tactical and short-term in nature, with a shorter gap between plan and execution, the need for monitoring is less apparent. The comparison of results with objectives is more obvious, and the opportunities for taking corrective action have already gone.

2. In the case of strategic planning, with its longer time-scale, and the need to make short-term adjustments while maintaining long-term objectives, the monitoring process is absolutely essential to success. Monitoring is needed primarily for the following purposes:

a) to measure the extent to which objectives are being achieved

b) to measure the rate at which progress towards objectives is occurring

c) to identify deficiencies in the short-term action plans needing correction

d) to identify changes in conditions or in the basic assumptions underlying the strategy which may require changes in the long-term plan.

3. Information of this kind is needed:

a) to provide decision-makers with the information they need to align current programmes with long-term policies

b) to provide the general public with the information they need in deciding whether to give continuing support to the strategic plan.

4. It should be noted that this kind of data collection, analysis and presentation of results in a usable form could easily become a large-scale operation in its own right, of the kind that treasurers or finance managers are generally reluctant to support. As with new buildings, it is always easier to get approval for initial construction than for subsequent maintenance, however vital the latter may be to get the maximum return from the former. In practice, these conflicting considerations require two things. First, monitoring must be given from the outset a high priority as an essential part of the whole strategic planning operation. Second, the criteria chosen for monitoring results should be the minimum really necessary for assessing progress and taking any corrective action.

5. With these constraints in mind, we believe that a minimum monitoring programme must devise criteria covering at least the following points (remembering that each strategic authority will have to adjust any standard list of requirements to its own special needs).

Monitoring long-term objectives

6. We are referring here to the long-term objectives of the strategy - social, economic and environmental - as set out in Part One of the Regional Development Strategy.

7. Criteria for these are likely to be the most difficult to formulate, because to some extent they will involve trying to measure intangibles such as 'quality of life' involving a mixture of the definable (e.g. reduction in homelessness or more local parks) and the more subjective (e.g. higher standard of living or a greater feeling of neighbourliness). The other difficulty so far as measuring the progress achieved by the plan is concerned is to identify the extent to which the strategic plan, with its focus on physical development, has contributed to social and economic objectives.

8. In spite of these difficulties, finding criteria for measuring progress on these fundamental objectives will be an important part of making the strategy work, and evidence of improvements in existing trends and conditions in respect of these will help to provide the kind of overview which will not emerge from the more detailed monitoring of the specific proposals in the plan.
9. The formulation of these criteria will be an important part of the public consultation at an early stage in the preparation of the strategy, since these will be the means by which public perceptions of success or failure will be judged.

10. Examples of possible criteria relative to strategic objectives are given in Appendix A.

**Monitoring the long-term plan**

11. In comparison with the kind of criteria we have just been discussing, the monitoring of the long-term plan for physical development and environmental protection will be less subjective, less dependent on assessing public or user perceptions of the quality of life or the quality of service, and more focussed on defined physical proposals for achieving social and economic objectives. The plan will have interpreted the broad strategic objectives in terms of specific targets and quantified programmes for achieving them. Monitoring will be concerned with measuring trends and rates of change, identifying discrepancies or shortfalls, and providing management with the basis for either strengthening implementation or amending the plan.

12. Even here however, it will be important to avoid relying on simple output measures, when the impact on objectives is what monitoring at the strategic level should be reporting on. For example, in housing it is not the total number of new (or rehabilitated) dwelling units that is significant, but measures such as:

a) the net increase in total dwelling units in habitable condition

b) the ratio of such habitable units to total households requiring housing

c) the proportion of affordable housing relative to residents' incomes

d) the relation between the rate of obsolescence and new build/rehabilitation

e) an improved regional distribution of housing relative to jobs.

It is only measures of this kind that can be related to the basic strategic objectives of improved housing conditions for all, a better balance of housing and employment, and an improved availability of housing in all parts of the region.

13. Similar considerations would apply to other elements of the plan such as employment, transport, sustainability objectives and so on. On matters such as the availability of recreation and community facilities, the distinction between what is part of the regional strategy and what is a matter for the local development plan will of course influence what kind of monitoring is done. Some sharing of monitoring facilities, and some matching of regional and local monitoring criteria, may well prove advantageous.

**Monitoring the long-term financial investment plan**

14. The monitoring of the long-term financial investment plan will be the most innovatory part of the strategic planning process, for two reasons: it goes well beyond what has been normal content of development plans in this country, and it also goes well beyond the time-scale of investment programming by government, whether central or local. There is therefore even less experience to draw on than with monitoring generally, and until such experience has been gained it is only possible to highlight some principles that should be applied:

a) It is unlikely that the steady flow of investment capital that will be necessary to make a reality of the long-term strategy for development can be provided unless there is a programme for acquisition and disposal of development sites, coupled with the retention by the strategic authority of some share of the increased value generated by the strategic plan. Monitoring reports to demonstrate the financial costs and benefits to the region will be a vital part of creating confidence, and convincing both investors (whether public or private) and the public that the strategy has a sound economic basis.

b) Since implementation of the development strategy will depend on both public and private investment, some regular consultation between the regional authority and private business interests in the region will be necessary, to monitor future expectations and intentions regarding levels and timing of major investments.

c) Since the funding of the planning work and of the implementation of the plan is partly dependent on regional taxes and partly on government and EC grants, careful monitoring of actual receipts against the assumptions built into the strategy will be necessary as a regular check that the programming remains realistic - bearing in mind that the cross-sectoral co-ordination of various development projects is meant to be a valuable advantage of the strategic approach.

**PART SIX: ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT**

1. Following the growing awareness of the threats to the long-term viability of the natural environment resulting from the damaging impact of many contemporary industrial and urban developments, it is gradually becoming common practice to require the preparation of environmental impact statements for major development projects, to show whether or not their impact on the environment is within the limits that have been set. There appears to be a logical inconsistency in requiring this for individual
schemes but not for whole plans or strategies. Furthermore there would be a certain weakness in the reliability of long-term strategies if the nature and scale of the major developments provided for in the strategy was in doubt because of uncertainty about their acceptability in terms of environmental impact.

2. In some cases it may be true that whether or not a given development will be environmentally acceptable is dependent on its detailed design; in that case, the assessment of its environmental impact needs to be done not when it is proposed for inclusion in the development strategy but when a detailed design for its implementation is being prepared. In other cases however there will be unavoidable impacts from even the best-designed projects, and the cumulative impact of all such projects included within the development strategy would need to be assessed in order to establish the future viability of the strategy as a whole.

3. It seems inevitable that environmental impact assessments will be required not only for individual projects and short-term development programmes, but also for long-term plans forming part of strategies for future regional development. Recent moves by the European Commission and new research proposed by the Department of the Environment show that official thinking is already taking this line. Appropriate techniques will have to be developed, and experience gradually built up, as to the most effective approach at the three different levels of detail or concreteness. But if long-term regional development strategies are to serve both human welfare and the health of the natural environment, assessing the environmental impact of these strategies before their adoption seems as necessary as the corresponding (but more detailed) assessment of individual projects.

4. This will be even more necessary if long-term plans are coupled with more effective implementation in the ways we have proposed in this report. The new system we have outlined will be more powerful in its ability to promote development and change: more powerful in achieving desirable goals and beneficial objectives, but also more powerful in its potential for environmental damage. The need is therefore that much greater for environmental checks and controls to ensure future sustainability.

5. The corresponding benefit will be a major improvement in our ability to anticipate avoidable damage to the environment and to take corrective action. It was after all not long ago that major individual projects were approved without regard to their environmental impact on more than the immediate locality. Increasingly that is no longer the case, but there is no assurance that dealing one at a time with individual projects or individual localities will reduce impacts for whole regions to an acceptable level. We now need to take the next logical step by ensuring that the cumulative effect of development plans taken as a whole does not exceed established environmental limits.

6. Regional strategies for future development should therefore include a full statement of the environmental impact of its long-term policies, short-term development programmes and specific development proposals, judged against an environmental audit baseline for the region, the latter being set in line with national objectives and targets.
Powers and Resources for Implementing Regional Strategy

1. As already noted in Section 4 above, the present division of decision-making and administration between central and local government has not resulted in the evolution of longer-term strategies for guiding development, in spite of the long history of town and country planning in Britain. Of equal, if not greater, importance has been the short-termism which characterizes government finance, both central and local. The one-year-at-a-time practices of the Treasury, the increasing interference of central government in local government finances, and the increasing dependence of local government (the official planning authorities) on central government funds and approvals, have made both the formulation and the implementation of even medium-term development strategies almost impossible.

2. Our conclusion from this experience is that the prerequisite for effective strategic planning is twofold:

   a) regional authorities empowered to make strategic plans to which local development and all major development agencies must conform
   b) regional authorities with sufficient independence in their financial operations to raise the necessary implementation funds and to budget with reasonable consistency over at least the period of their three- to five-year action programmes, so that all major investors have a dependable framework within which to devise their own future investment plans.

3. Since the regional authorities will be taking over from central government the main responsibility for transport and other physical infrastructure provision, and for economic development, it would be appropriate for them to take over the corresponding tax revenues. Although central government would have its traditional role of making balancing grants to compensate for regional differences in resources and basic needs, we propose that all regional authorities should from the beginning have independent sources for at least 50% of their revenue requirements, with preferably not more than 20% drawn from the Treasury.

4. We propose that regional authorities’ revenues should be drawn from the following sources:

   a) all road vehicle licensing fees in the region
   b) any road, bridge and ferry tolls
   c) all business property rates in the region
   d) equalization grants from central government
   e) development grants from European Community regional and structural funds
   f) precepts on local authorities for specific services
   g) borrowing from Regional Development Banks (which should be established) to finance major physical infrastructure projects
   h) ‘betterment’ remitted by Regional Development Corporations (see below).

5. The role of agencies other than the regional authority itself in implementing the regional development strategy will also be of vital importance. The major industries and private developers will have their own financial resources to deploy in ways which take maximum advantage of the investment framework provided by the strategic development plan. Smaller businesses and local enterprises, as well as non-commercial community initiatives, also have an important part to play in making the strategy a success.

6. For the purpose of ‘promoting and assisting investment and enterprise’ every region will need to have a range of specifically regional financial institutions geared to the development needs, large and small, of each region. In some cases these may be semi-autonomous branches of national bodies, but there should be some wholly regional bodies as well, including a Regional Development Bank to provide the necessary financial assistance and advice especially for local enterprises not large enough to find non-local support.

7. The actual carrying-out of major infrastructure projects requires very different skills and management from the strategic mode which should predominate within the regional authority. For those projects which are regional and public in nature, and therefore not the primary responsibility of either private developers or local authorities, there will need to be one or more Regional Development Corporations to implement specific schemes, with powers including:

   a) land acquisition and site assembly at prices based on existing use value plus a generous allowance for disturbance so as to expedite progress
   b) disposal of prepared development sites or completed development at open market prices, the resulting betterment to be remitted to the regional authority.
The Process of Regional Strategic Planning

1. The process of preparing, monitoring and up-dating strategic development plans at the regional level will naturally and quite properly resemble in many important respects the well-established procedures for preparing and adopting development plans in this country which have evolved over the 45 years since 1947. This will take advantage of the accumulated experience of central and local government, the development industry, the public and the various related professions. In many respects the process will be familiar to all of these bodies, who will for some obvious reasons be reassured that they will be dealing with a tried and tested process in which many of the practical snags have gradually been dealt with over the years, partly by amendments to the legislation and partly by the development of well-known codes of practice.

2. Herein lies a serious danger, of a kind already experienced. For example, when the Greater London Council began functioning in 1965 with responsibility for being the strategic planning authority for London, it proved to be exceedingly difficult in practice to shake off the old habits (of both planners and politicians) ingrained during the previous two decades of preparing detailed local development plans. Determining what was essentially of strategic importance for London as a whole, as distinct from what was essentially a matter for local choice, required a difficult and not wholly successful transition to new modes of thinking, and operating.

3. The same problems will face the new regional strategic authorities we are advocating. It is important therefore to restate the most significant differences between strategic regional plans and the development plans with which we are now familiar, and to think about the implications of these for the process of strategic planning at the regional level.

4. The essential differences may be summarized briefly as follows:

a) The regional plans will deal comprehensively with all major developments having important impacts on the future development of the region, rather than having some of the most major (e.g. airports, power stations, main roads and railways) settled on an ad hoc basis outside the planning system. While this will have clear advantages in producing coherent and realistic strategies, the complexity and the far-reaching impact of these huge projects will still require some form of public inquiry apart from the main strategic plan inquiry. The TCPA has already published recommendations for improved procedures drawing on its extensive experience of involvement in inquiries such as those into the third London airport and the nuclear power stations at Sizewell and Hinkley Point.

b) The regional planning authorities will be bringing such decisions closer to local government, local business and local communities by taking over the primary responsibility for approval and funding from central government. This 'bridging' function between national policy and local design will require the development of suitable liaison arrangements for enabling both central and local government, as well as regional businesses and local communities, to make their own contributions to the planning and implementation process.

c) The regional strategy will be dealing explicitly with a wider range of objectives (social, economic and environmental) than the narrow 'land use' objectives imposed on local government by the Department of the Environment. 'Development' will have a more realistic definition encompassing all those changes of a developmental nature needed to achieve long-term strategic objectives even if not exclusively physical (for example, matters of price and tenure which are fundamental to the 'affordable housing' objective). The best local planning authorities have frequently tried to enlarge the boundaries of what was thought permissible for inclusion in development plans, and embryonic strategic bodies such as LPAC have shown in detail why it was necessary to do so. This will be even more necessary if the new regional strategies are to be realistic and achievable.

d) Because of the long time horizon necessary for strategic planning, the link between strategic objectives and current action programmes will have to be given special emphasis, using every opportunity to make clear the contribution which particular projects are designed to make to the adopted vision of the future. To be effective, the strategy must gradually result in recognizable trends which can be seen to lead at a reasonable pace from present conditions to future intentions. Intermediate targets will have to be established for measuring progress, and regular monitoring will be necessary to keep decision-makers and public alike informed of the extent to which adopted policies are proving to be effective in practice. A permanent and
imaginative programme of public information giving practical evidence of the relationship between current action and future vision will be essential.

e) Also because of the long time horizon, there will need to be much thought and great care given to distinguishing between, and establishing an acceptable relationship between, the key strategic objectives - which need to be fairly stable though not wholly immutable - and the current action programmes - where flexibility and responsiveness to changing conditions and current opportunities are a vital necessity. There must be a stable rudder, but not a straitjacket.

f) For reasons already discussed, implementation will have a much higher status in regional strategic plans, requiring:
1) stronger links between physical development proposals and financial resources
2) a clearer relationship between private and public investment.

5. One of the most important implications of this much stronger focus on implementation will be the need to think hard about the ways in which the private sector can best be involved. It may be that suitable individuals from private industry and finance could be appointed to non-executive positions serving with elected members on policy-making committees. Or it may be that the structure should be more of a hybrid between current government and business practices, with the leading figures from the regional assembly forming a management board, including both operational directors and non-executive directors, ideally with a high level of delegated responsibility but with proper public accountability mechanisms and controls.

6. To be politically and publicly acceptable, this greater private sector input will need to be balanced and complemented by greater involvement by the public and the voluntary sector, partly in relation to 'quality of life' objectives and partly to ensure that implementation programmes cater for the interests of the many whose interests are not adequately served by the formal government or business structures. How to marry the 'bottom-up' approach with stronger strategic direction will be an important issue which cannot be avoided even at the regional level. If the strategy is to attract the wide support and understanding necessary for success, ways will have to be found for ascertaining the views of people living in the region about key elements such as the nature of the future living environment, the diversity of needs and aspirations to be met, and the priorities for investment in improvements.

7. But how to do this? How to provide for effective public participation in the preparation of long-term regional strategies is particularly difficult. Experience has shown that the more local, immediate and concrete the proposals, the easier it is to generate interest and to discuss the pros and cons of alternatives. Even so, really effective participation by 'the public' is still - 25 years after the Skeffington Report - a fairly uncommon achievement. When proposals are more remote, long-term and lacking in design detail, as much of the regional strategy is bound to be, it is much more difficult to attract active public participation except for limited high-profile schemes such as nuclear waste depositories or major new airports.

8. A variety of techniques are available, including public opinion surveys, sustained media coverage, exhibitions, face-to-face interviews, and public workshops where all the major interest groups can put forward differing (perhaps conflicting) objectives and gradually recognize the need to accommodate each other's needs. All of this requires a determined highly-organized programme, time and patience, and adequate resources. And these will not be made available without a clear understanding of a basic political truth: the widespread support necessary for maintaining and implementing the strategy cannot be secured unless its key elements reflect the wishes generally of the people living in the region, who must feel that in some meaningful way they 'own' the plan and that it is designed to meet their most stronglyfelt needs.

8. The right kind of staffing will be a vitally important issue. New approaches to policy formulation, more effective implementation and more probing monitoring in relation to basic objectives, the testing and evaluation of sustainability criteria — all of these will require new ways of thinking and operating. The new regional authorities would no doubt draw some of their staff from existing government sources such as those with expertise in information collection and analysis, land use and transportation planning, and democratic administration. But there will be a need for some skills not traditionally associated with local government officers or civil servants, such as private sector capital fund raising and project management. We do not believe however that effective strategic direction is compatible with large bureaucracies. The kind of highly integrated teamwork required to produce balanced and comprehensive strategies, and the energetic implementation of them, is more likely to come from a small support staff well rewarded with substantial incentives for good performance.

9. Taken together, these differences between the new regional strategies and current development plans will require that the process of preparing and implementing strategic plans for regions must in some important respects be radically different from current development plan practices. It is beyond the scope of this paper to spell out in detail just what form these changes should take. Inevitably they will best be worked out 'on the job', but for this to happen there must be full awareness by all parties involved of the differences outlined above.

10. In the meantime, it would be helpful in carrying the debate forward if the implications for the following groups could be gradually thought through by those concerned:

a) local planning authorities, in relation to both structure and district plans

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b) central government departments and their regional offices

c) the development and construction industries

d) financial institutions, especially regarding future regional operations

e) voluntary and community groups, especially their input to regional strategies

f) the planning and development professions, especially regarding mid-career training.
Appendix A

Some Examples of Possible Monitoring Criteria

Regional Housing Objectives:
To provide enough dwellings in habitable condition to house all households at least a minimum standard, of a sufficient variety of types and sizes to meet the varied needs of the local population, in locations convenient for employment, and available at prices affordable by all.

Criteria for Assessing Progress:
 a) How many people, and what proportion of households, are still homeless?
 b) How many people are still overcrowded?
 c) What proportion of dwellings are in habitable condition?
 d) How many and what proportion of people are reasonably satisfied with their housing conditions?
 e) Is the balance between jobs and homes improving?

Regional Transport Objectives:
To provide improved accessibility and more attractive travelling conditions for daily and weekly trips to work, to school, to shops, and to community and recreation facilities, with more real choice as to mode of travel, for all residents regardless of income level and degree of mobility; and to provide a better integrated transport system giving more convenient and efficient distribution of goods and services throughout the region.

Criteria for Assessing Progress:
 a) Is public transport more accessible and more attractive?
 b) Is walking and cycling becoming easier?
 c) Is road congestion reducing?
 d) Are accident rates going down in number and severity?
 e) Are more destinations readily accessible by children and by those who are elderly, disabled or on below average incomes?
 f) Are journey times and costs (excluding fuel costs) decreasing?

Regional Sustainability Objectives:
To reduce net consumption per head of scarce natural resources; to increase the proportion of energy derived from renewable sources; to reduce waste volumes and increase the proportion recycled; and to improve water quality, air quality and soil quality by reducing pollution.

Criteria for Assessing Progress:
 a) Is the quality of the natural environment improving?
 b) Is consumption of energy in all forms decreasing?
 c) Is the volume of waste going to landfill sites decreasing?
 d) Is public support for sustainability programmes increasing?

You can engage in the debate about regional development and strategic planning by sending comments on this paper to the Director of the TCPA at 17 Carlton House Terrace, London SW1Y 5AS.
The TCPA

Founded in 1899 as the Garden City Association, the TCPA is the longest-established voluntary organisation concerned with planning and the environment. It campaigns for improvements to the environment through effective planning, public participation and sensitive development. As a result of its lobbying, evidence to public inquiries and policy statements it has secured many significant changes in planning policies and improvements to the planning system.

The TCPA’s present concerns include campaigning for better strategic planning for the regions of Britain, London and other metropolitan areas; the need to rectify the imbalances of the North-South divide, including spreading the benefits of the Channel Tunnel nationwide; and the formulation of planning policies to attain the goals of sustainable development. It continues to promote new settlements to take the pressures off existing towns and villages.

The TCPA believes that everyone has a right to a decent home in a good, human-scale environment combining the best features of town and country; that new communities are better than soulless urban sprawl, and that homes with gardens are better than high-rise development; that regions and communities need more power over decisions that affect them; that co-operation and partnerships between people and professionals, the public and private sectors, and the local and central levels are vital to renewal and successful development; that planning must aim to improve the quality of people’s lives and the environment in which they live, and that planning policies should reflect the needs and aspirations of local communities; and that planning policies should promote the goals of sustainable development.

An all party non-sectarian body, the TCPA is a registered charity. Membership comprises interested individuals, businesses and local authorities. It runs an extensive programme of conferences and seminars and publishes two periodicals.

To find out more about the TCPA and its activities, contact the Membership Secretary at the TCPA, 17 Carlton House Terrace, London SW1Y 5AS.