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Can you be a future planner?

Guidance notes

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University of the
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RTPI 2014

100 years of professional planning

Can you be a future planner?

What will your neighbourhood be like in 2050?

Guidance notes and resource book

Introduction

2014 is the centenary of the [Royal Town Planning Institute \(RTPI\)](#). Building on the work of Ebenezer Howard and Raymond Unwin, who had pioneered the development of Garden Cities as part of a solution to the deprivation that characterised urban Britain in the 19th century, Thomas Adams was elected as the Institute's first President some six months before the outbreak of the First World War in March 1914.

As part of a programme of activities to mark this milestone in the history of the profession, the RTPI South West is promoting a Schools Competition in collaboration with the universities of [Plymouth](#) and the [West of England \(Bristol\)](#). It has attracted sponsorship from [Stride Treglown](#). The competition invites young people from across the region to become a future planner by encouraging them to **visualise the type of neighbourhood that we should be living in by 2050 if we are to achieve greater sustainability. The competition is open to students who live across Cornwall, Devon, Dorset, Gloucestershire, Somerset and Wiltshire who are currently in years 9 to 13. Although the competition seeks individual entries, these may encouraged through some kind of discussion or exercise in class.**

What is planning?

Planning is the way in which societies manage the way in which rural and urban environments change. Planning exists to some degree in every era and society. For example the Romans had a clear view on how their towns should be laid out, a view which can still be seen today in towns like Cirencester and Exeter. The Norman Invasion of 1066 and subsequent medieval period produced settlements dominated by castles and towns laid out according to the allocation of burgage plots. Totnes, in Devon, is a good example of this sort of planning.

Planners can have a real impact on places and peoples' lives by helping to deliver positive change across towns, cities and neighbourhoods. By getting to know a place, its history, its challenges and its community, they can begin to develop exciting plans and visions for how future change can be approached and managed.

The roots of planning in the UK

The planning we know today largely emerged from a response to the rapid industrial growth and urbanisation of the 19th Century which resulted in overcrowded, polluted and insanitary living conditions for a growing urban poor. From the late 18th Century philanthropists like Robert Owen (New Lanark), Titus Salt (Saltaire) and Lord Lever (Port Sunlight) sought to devise new approaches to building places for people to live and work. This was taken forward by Howard and Urwin who proposed garden cities as a new form of settlement combining the best of town and country – seen today in Letchworth and Welwyn which were to be forerunners to new and expanded towns such as Swindon. The Government has recently announced plans to develop a new generation of garden cities (such as at Ebbsfleet, Kent) thereby demonstrating the enduring power of Howard's idea.

While the roots of town planning as a profession were laid down in the period leading up to World War 1, planning was given a greater role in the provision of 'homes fit for heroes' to meet the needs of a changing society. In the interwar period the focus for planning was largely upon the laying out of new housing areas and dealing with uncontrolled suburban expansion created by the growing mobility of people and industry. However this was only done on a piecemeal basis.

Introducing a comprehensive system of planning

The Town and Country Planning Act 1947 laid the foundations of the planning system as it exists today. Controls were introduced which required all development and changes in land to be subject to planning permission. In addition democratically elected local planning authorities were given the responsibility for preparing a development plan which sought to provide adequate land for future growth.

In the immediate post-war period the priorities of planning were to deliver the reconstruction of war damaged cities such as Bristol, Exeter and Plymouth, provide land for a major programme of house building and address the growing economic disparity between London and the South East and the rest of the country.

However by the 1960s people were beginning to question the wisdom of some of the decisions made. For example the disruption to communities caused by large scale redevelopment of traditional working class housing, the construction of high rise and modernist housing and attempts to accommodate traffic in towns by building urban motorways were all subject to growing criticism.

As a response public participation was introduced as a key component of planning and today communities have been given the opportunity to prepare their own Neighbourhood Plans to shape the future of their area.

Planning and sustainable development

At the same time planning has been given a key role in helping to deliver sustainable development and help society reduce and adapt to climate change. This includes restricting development in areas which are or could become subject to flooding, trying to reduce the need to travel by car, promoting the production and use of sustainable energy and protecting valuable environmental and cultural assets such as Exmoor and Dartmoor National Parks and historic buildings.

Balancing competing interests

None of this is easy as planning takes place within a constantly changing political, economic and social context. Landowners and developers want planning to deliver permission for new houses, shops and offices, while local residents expect to be protected from unwelcome change in their surroundings. A new word has been coined – NIMBY (not in my back yard) – to describe individuals and communities who are resistant to change. Finding the right balance between these often competing interests is a key role of planning which is why it is often in the news.

Reflections

Looking back, there is little doubt that planning has had a significant effect in shaping the character of town and country in the South West over the past century which has seen substantial changes including:

- Two World Wars which, in the case of WW2, led to significant destruction to some of the region's towns and cities.
- Growth of regional population which has more than doubled with significantly increased life expectancy.
- Increased urbanisation resulting in a higher proportion of population living in towns and cities which have spread into the surrounding countryside.
- Decline in the number of people employed in traditional industries such as farming, mining, fishing and manufacturing offset by growth in service industries.
- Growth in personal mobility brought about by the growth of car ownership and the development of the motorway and trunk road network alongside the contraction of the regional rail network.
- Development of electronic and digital communications including the growth of the internet.
- Increased social mobility and the changing role of females in the labour force.
- Changing patterns of tourism and leisure brought about by competition from countries accessible by air travel.
- Creation of National Parks and other protected areas such as Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty and Heritage Coast.
- Membership of the European Union and changes to the traditional structure of local government across the region.

Looking forward

It is interesting to speculate how many of these changes could have been anticipated in 1914 and a hundred years later the challenge is to anticipate the changes that will confront society in the 21st Century. Based on current knowledge, changes could include:

- An ageing population with more people living beyond an extended retirement age. This is likely to require significant changes in health and social care provision.
- Continuing and growing use of Smart technology in all aspects of our lives e.g. remote working and internet shopping.

- Growing competition for finite resources and products and services arising from the continuing globalisation of trade.
- Reduced use of fossil fuels. By 2050 the UK is committed to achieving an 80% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions over 1990 levels. This requires a revolution in the production and use of energy with a much greater role given to renewable energy.
- Impact of climate change with an anticipated increase in global temperatures and sea level and more intense weather events.

Can you be a future planner? The competition

The need to 'look ahead' is a key element in our regional competition.

The competition is open to schools across the catchment area of the RTPI South West (Cornwall, Devon, Dorset, Gloucestershire, Somerset and Wiltshire). Students can enter via one of the following two categories:

- **Category one** – open to students in years 9, 10 and 11
- **Category two** – open to students in years 12 and 13

The competition is open to individual entries only. We would be grateful if you could publicise details of the competition to your students. Interested students might want to work on their entries in their own time, but you may also want to convene a class session where students are given some time to work on their ideas. Although the activity can work well 'in-class', you might also want to think about the possibility of taking a group outside of the classroom in order that they can think as they explore their neighbourhood directly.

The task for both categories is the same in that we are asking students to visualise the type of neighbourhood that we should be living in by 2050 if we are to achieve greater sustainability. Ultimately each submission will need to present ideas for how a neighbourhood known to the student should be improved and/or adapted.

Thinking ahead to 2050 is not an easy task. We therefore suggest that ideas be focused towards the following three areas of the chosen neighbourhood:

- **a typical residential street**
- **an area of open space**
- **a shopping area**

We hope that engagement in the competition will:

- Help young people develop an understanding of the role of planning in dealing with often difficult and challenging issues confronting communities.
- Help young people to 'find their voice' and, where appropriate, contribute to consultation on planning in their area. It has long been recognised that while young people have a greater stake than most in decisions affecting their area their views are seldom heard.
- Encourage young people to explore the potential for pursuing a career in planning.

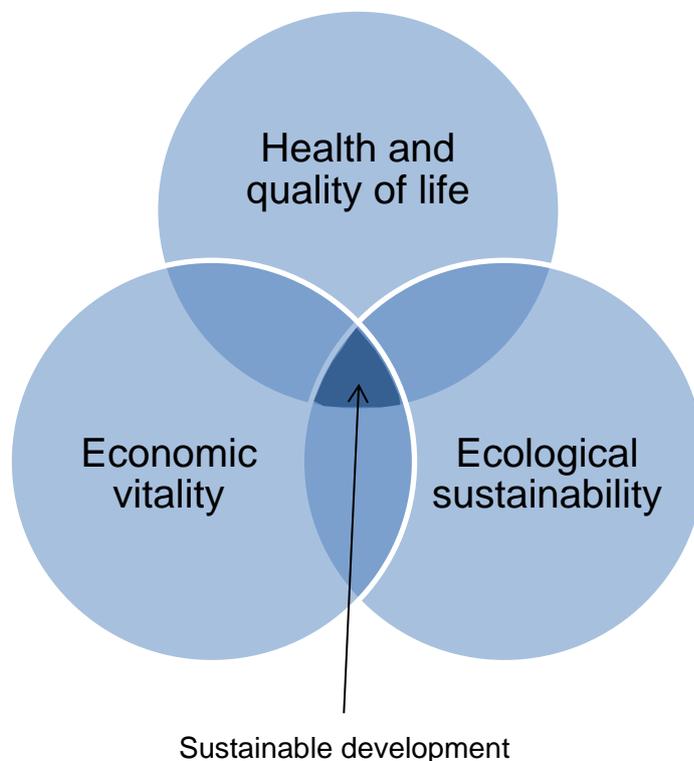
Towards greater sustainability

As noted already, students are required to visualise the type of neighbourhood that we should be living in by 2050 if we are to achieve **greater sustainability**. Although the term 'sustainability' is commonly used today, it is useful to return to the definition provided by Brundtland in the late 1980s:

"Sustainable development is development which meets the needs of the present generation without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs" (WECD, 1987).

As Barton, Grant and Guise (2010) explain, *"sustainable development is about maintaining and enhancing the quality of life- social, economic and environmental- while living within the carrying capacity of supporting eco-systems and the resource base"* (page 6).

The classic trefoil diagram (below) emphasises that it is not simply about choosing one of the three aspects of sustainability over the others; responses must seek to marry all three to achieve win-win-win solutions.



A variety of work has been undertaken to explore the type of ingredients that are needed for a community to become 'sustainable'. A selection is included through **table 1**. While all communities are encouraged to become more 'sustainable' over-time, there are also developments, of varying size and scale that are purposefully designed to achieve the highest levels of sustainability. A search on the internet, using such terms as 'eco-city' and 'eco-home' will reveal some wide-ranging examples from across the globe.

How to enter the competition

Students may want to produce a poster, write a story, or create some kind of presentation (such as using Microsoft PowerPoint). With these, including some good visual material will be really important. They might even be tempted to write a song or a poem, or create a short film. Whatever their output it should contain less than 1000 words.

Of course all submissions must be original to the student, although they might want to talk their ideas through with friends. If they are using images that have not been taken by them then they must ensure that they have the permission of the owner to use them. They must state where images have been sourced from.

The prizes

The two categories will be judged separately by an expert panel. Credit will be given for originality, both in terms of ideas and the way they are presented. Prizes comprise:

- **1st Prize** – iPad Mini x2 with a copy of the award-winning book ‘Shaping Neighbourhoods’ uploaded
- **2nd Prize** – 2x £50 Amazon Vouchers and a copy of the award-winning book ‘Shaping Neighbourhoods’
- **3rd Prize** – 2x £25 Amazon Vouchers and a copy of the award-winning book ‘Shaping Neighbourhoods’
- **4 runners up prizes** – a copy of the award-winning book ‘Shaping Neighbourhoods’

Future Planners

The Future Planners Initiative aims to raise awareness of, and encourage an interest in, the planning profession. As part of this initiative one of the institute’s appointed regional Ambassadors can come into your School to talk to a group of students about the profession and provide an understanding of the type of activities that planners get involved with and lead to help shape our built and natural environments.

The discussion will include a [short introductory film](#) that introduces some of the challenges that planners have to embrace, together with a short and interactive presentation. This is designed to engage and encourage students to think about planning, how the environment is managed, what is good and bad about where they live and help them understand what shapes their local environment and the challenges facing communities as they plan for the future. The discussions will follow a pre prepared structure but can be tailored to suit your school. Typically the session will last for 40-45 minutes or the duration of one lesson slot.

Having this type of presentation can tap into key elements of the syllabus as well as promote the competition.

If you are interested then please send an email to: Nicholas12.Smith@uwe.ac.uk

Closing date and timescales

The closing date for entries is **22nd November 2014 by 5pm**. Students should include their name, address and contact number (or email address) on their entry.

Entrants must state what category they are entering under. The school year must relate to their situation at the closing date.

A Prize Winning Ceremony for the two category winners will take place following the closing date on a date and at a venue to be confirmed. Travel costs for the winner and their immediate family to attend will be met by the RTPI South West.

Sending us your entries

By post:

Nick Smith
Associate Head of Department
Department of Geography and Environmental Management
University of the West of England
Bristol
BS16 1QY

By email:

rtpisw2050@gmail.com

Please minimise file size as much as you can.

For further details:

Please contact Helen Clarke, RTPI SW coordinator, on 07974 531405.

References and suggested links

Barton, H., Grant, M. and Guise, R. (2010) *Shaping Neighbourhoods: For Local Health, Health and Global Sustainability*. London: Routledge.

Royal Town Planning Institute: <http://www.rtpi.org.uk/>

Towards Sustainability: <http://www.towards-sustainability.co.uk/issues/susdev/index.html>

Town and Country Planning Association: www.tcpa.org.uk

UN Habitat: <http://unhabitat.org/>

World Commission on Environment and Development (1987) *Our Common Inheritance*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Terms and conditions

1. Only one entry per person is allowed
2. Proof of sending entry by post or e-mail is not proof of our receipt of your entry. No responsibility can be accepted for entries that are lost, delayed or damaged. Entrants submitting their work by post are encouraged to use registered mail. Responsibility for postage costs rests with the entrant.
3. Unfortunately we are unable to return entries; entrants should retain a copy of their work.
4. Winners will be formally notified (by email or post) within 14 days of the closing date.
5. The decision of the judging panel is final; no correspondence will be entered into.
6. No cash alternative or alternative prize is available on entrants' request but we reserve the right to offer an alternative prize of equal or greater value.
7. Competition winners will be invited to take part in or co-operate with publicity.
8. We reserve the right to amend these rules at any time. Entry in the competition implies acceptance of these rules.

Table one

| Lifestyle | |
|--------------------------------------|---|
| <i>To promote healthy lifestyles</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To encourage and facilitate the use of public (bus and train) and active forms of travel (e.g. walking and cycling). • To encourage sport and physical activity. • To encourage local food production and access to fresh food. |
| Community | |
| <i>To enhance local community</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To create opportunities for local social groups and networks. • To promote mental health through supportive social environments. • To strengthen social and cultural life. |
| <i>To increase local community</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To promote the involvement of community and voluntary groups. • To create local partnerships. • To promote strong leadership. • To encourage local involvement with respect to how the neighbourhood operates. |
| Economy | |
| <i>To promote enterprise</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To encourage business growth and local entrepreneurial opportunities. • To encourage local spending. • To promote urban regeneration and to encourage the recycling of land and buildings. |
| <i>To promote employment</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To ensure diverse local job opportunities. • To encourage further education and training opportunities. • To ensure employment opportunities are accessible to the population through good public transport links. |

| Activities | |
|---|--|
| <i>To increase equity, fairness and freedom of choice</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To provide a variety of housing (e.g. by offering homes of different size, type and tenure that are attractive to all age and income groups). • To promote accessible local facilities (by providing access for all). • To offer a variety of facilities to serve different community needs. |
| Built environment | |
| <i>To improve safety and security</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To reduce the risk for accidents. • To reduce the likelihood (and fear) of crime. • To encourage a sense of ownership and belonging. |
| <i>To enhance environmental quality</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To create attractive streets and spaces (i.e. the public realm). • To value local heritage and promote local distinctiveness. • To reduce noise and vandalism. • To provide robust, adaptable and well-designed buildings. |
| Natural environment | |
| <i>To safeguard natural resources</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To manage water resources sustainably. • To reduce the demand for non-renewable resources. • To encourage re-use and recycling. • To ensure good air quality. |
| <i>To promote wildlife and open country</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To protect and enhance local habitats. • To provide a variety of green space. • To minimise the loss of agricultural land and to encourage the use of brownfield land. |
| <i>Global ecology</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To increase the energy-efficiency of buildings. • To promote renewable energy. • To reduce car reliance and the need to travel. |

Nick Smith, University of the West of England
Chris Balch, University of Plymouth