



Planning Together

*Local Strategic Partnerships (LSPs) and
Spatial Planning: a practical guide*



RTPI

mediation of space · making of place



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*Local Strategic Partnerships (LSPs) and
Spatial Planning: a practical guide*

On 5th May 2006 the responsibilities of the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM) transferred to the Department for Communities and Local Government.

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Introduction

Place-Shaping, Planning & Partnership

This short, practical guide aims to improve collaboration between planners and those involved with Local Strategic Partnerships (LSP). It is focused on the strategic leadership role of local authorities in shaping good places, creating sustainable *mixed communities* and delivering better local services. It explains the importance of the relationship between Sustainable Community Strategies (SCS) and Local Development Frameworks (LDF). The guide has been commissioned through the Royal Town Planning Institute and Marilyn Taylor Associates and prepared in conjunction with a Sounding Board of practitioners and policy advisers which met three times during 2006.¹

The Government's aim, as set out in the Local Government White Paper, is that there should be complete coherence between the SCS and all other plans for the area, including the LDF and the *Regional Economic Strategy*. The aim of this guide is to provide practical suggestions on the steps planners and LSPs can take to develop a more collaborative approach to achieve this. The intended audience includes elected members, planners, LSP coordinators and other relevant local authority staff, members of LSPs and Government Offices (GOs).

The White Paper describes the role of local authorities as 'place shapers' providing the strategic leadership needed to bring together various local agencies and groups in order to build a vision of how to respond to and address the challenges facing a locality in a co-ordinated way. They will do this in a variety of ways but critically through partnership, by developing a joint vision, supporting and working with other bodies and commissioning others. The White Paper envisages that the conditions for effective partnership working will be enhanced through:

- requiring local authorities to prepare the Local Area Agreement (LAA) in consultation with others and placing a duty on the local authority and named partners to co-operate with each other to agree targets in the LAA;
- making clear that the SCS and other local and regional plans should have regard to each other;
- streamlining the procedures for involving communities in the creation of SCSs, LAAs and LDFs; and
- improving and integrating strategic planning procedures.

This publication is not offering detailed formal guidance. Its task is to provide some basic explanations of the processes involved, especially for non-planners, suggesting links to further information for those who need or want to know more, and outlining the mutual benefits available through the new mechanisms now in place. The aim is improved local outcomes through LAAs, the delivery of sustainable development and the promotion of active citizen and stakeholder engagement throughout.

¹ See Appendix One for membership of the Sounding Board

The contents of the guide are correct at the time of publication. However, it is anticipated that there may be further changes as the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Bill proceeds through Parliament and the Government prepares more detailed implementation guidance for local authorities and their partners (particularly in two-tier areas). Further changes may also result from the proposed Planning White Paper currently in preparation.

Finally, whilst this guide acknowledges that many of the processes involved are complex and can lead practitioners to assume that collaboration is difficult, its core message is that a positive and productive relationship between the responsibilities of LSPs and the local planning process can commence at any stage through relatively easy, practical, and incremental steps. The most important step is to make a start in whatever way is most appropriate for each specific local circumstance.

Section One

LSPs and Spatial Planning

The planning system has been substantially reformed to embed community responsive policy-making at its heart and deliver *sustainable development*.² This takes its focus far wider than traditional land-use planning. The new *spatial planning* system is tasked to deliver positive social, economic and environmental outcomes, and requires planners to actively collaborate with the wide range of stakeholders and agencies that help to shape local areas and deliver local services.

The *Regional Spatial Strategy* (RSS) provides a broad development strategy for a region covering a fifteen to twenty year period. However, the RSS confines itself to matters of genuine regional and, where appropriate, sub-regional importance. The LDF sets out, in the form of a portfolio, the local development documents which collectively deliver the spatial planning strategy for the local planning authority's area. The RSS and LDF, together with national policies, form the framework for taking decisions on applications for planning permission. These plans should be drawn up with community involvement and present a shared vision and strategy of how the area should develop. The new planning system therefore both offers, and requires, the development of a stronger leadership role for local authorities and elected members, built on collaboration through LSPs and accountable delivery through LAAs.

The government intends that spatial planning objectives for local areas, as set out in the LDF, should be fully aligned not only with national and regional plans (most critically the RSS and the *Regional Economic Strategy* (RES)), but also with the shared local priorities set out in Sustainable Community Strategies (SCS).³ To achieve this, the Local Government White Paper strongly encourages local authorities to ensure that:

- their SCS takes full account of spatial and environmental issues;
- key spatial planning objectives for the area as set out in the LDF Core Strategy are fully aligned with SCS priorities; and
- the LAA, as the delivery contract with central government, is based on the priorities of the SCS and supported by local planning policy to deliver the outcomes agreed.

Aligning the content of strategies and achieving the rationalisation of plans and the linkages between them requires collaboration between different parts of the local governance and planning system that are not necessarily accustomed to working closely together. It is also recognised that the different responsibilities for plans and strategies within two-tier areas can pose additional challenges. However, there are several important reasons why collaboration is important. Joint working adds value to the process, saves time and resources, and offers many mutual benefits to those involved.

² all terms in italics are further explained in the Glossary on page 29

³ Local Development Frameworks and Sustainable Community Strategies are explained in more detail in Section Two of the guide

Why do planners need to work with LSPs?

- to benefit from the LSPs role in promoting and co-ordinating local stakeholder, community and business involvement in local decision-making and the potential for ensuring there is informed engagement with the planning process
- to contribute to the preparation of the SCS, helping the LSP with evidence and analysis, with spatial and environmental understanding and guidance on how the planning system can help deliver mixed sustainable communities outcomes
- to ensure that key spatial planning objectives for the area are fully aligned with the priorities identified in the SCS
- to understand the local plans and strategies of other service-delivery agencies and investors in the locality and ensure they are reflected in local planning policy (this is a requirement in the *Tests of Soundness* that the Planning Inspectorate apply to LDF documents as part of the statutory approval process)
- as a means of ensuring other service and delivery agencies, community organisations and businesses are aware of spatial policies identified in LDFs and RSSs and take account of these in their own business planning.

Why do LSPs need to contribute to Spatial Planning?

- to deliver the priorities of SCS by ensuring that they are fully reflected in spatial policies
- to help ensure that successful delivery of the outcomes specified in LAAs is aided by the local planning process
- to contribute to planners' understanding of the social, economic, environmental and community issues that need to be addressed by land use and other planning policies
- to co-ordinate the delivery of appropriate social and community infrastructure, particularly for areas of new development, renewal or regeneration
- to ensure that the spatial planning process assists efforts to tackle the root causes of problems, recognising the interdependencies involved in tackling issues such as deprivation and social exclusion
- to help ensure that planners are aware of implementation and infrastructure issues in developing plans and delivering planning decisions

Planning Policy Delivers LAA Outcomes

Many practitioners acknowledge that partnership between those responsible for what can be described as ‘physical’ interventions and those responsible for frontline service delivery (‘social’ interventions) is not always as robust as it could be. For example, it is not always obvious to some of those involved with LSPs how the planning system contributes towards the improved outcomes for citizens that LAAs are tasked to deliver. The following table provides some basic examples of the linkages that are potentially available. It is only a snapshot, but aims to prompt wider understanding of the benefits accruing from the stronger collaboration this guide is promoting.⁴

Examples of the Planning Contribution to achieving LAA Outcomes

Outcomes	Planning Contribution
Health & Wellbeing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● parks, recreation and sports provision, transport, walking and cycling, air quality, access to goods and services, strong economies and access to employment
Combating Climate Change	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● transport, walking and cycling, energy supply, recycling, housing design and renewal, bio-diversity, access to goods and services, minerals and waste, flood risk
Safer Communities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● licensing decisions, design, landscaping, recreational and sports provision, transport
Vibrant and Sustainable Neighbourhoods	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● housing, strong economies and access to employment, social and community infrastructure, transport, walking and cycling, service co-location, safe and green environments, school provision and design
Social Inclusion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● equal access to goods and services, transport, strong economies and access to employment, housing quality and housing provision, affordable energy, involving communities in plan making
Economic Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● availability of employment sites and access, transport, social and environmental infrastructure, housing – location, accessibility, levels and type of tenure, access to goods and services, energy provision

⁴ The Effective Practice in Spatial Planning project being undertaken by UCL and Deloitte for the RTPi, Communities and Local Government, GLA and JRF will shortly be publishing its final report and advice note reinforcing the importance of planners and LSPs working in collaboration and the contribution of spatial planning to the delivery of SCS and LAA objectives and place shaping.

Section Two

Integrating the LDF and the SCS

Sustainable development is the core principle underpinning planning, aiming to deliver a sustainable, innovative and productive economy with high levels of employment, and a just society that promotes social inclusion, sustainable communities and personal well being in ways that protect and enhance the physical environment and optimise resource and energy use.

The production of LDFs is governed by the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 and legislation made under that Act, with national policy being set out in (amongst other documents) the Planning Policy Statements issued through Communities and Local Government. At a regional level, Regional Assemblies (or in London, the Mayor) prepare the RSS. Local planning authorities prepare an LDF, which responds to the priorities of the RSS. The LDF also responds to other important regional strategies, for example the *Regional Economic Strategy* prepared by the Regional Development Agencies.

The Local Development Framework (LDF)

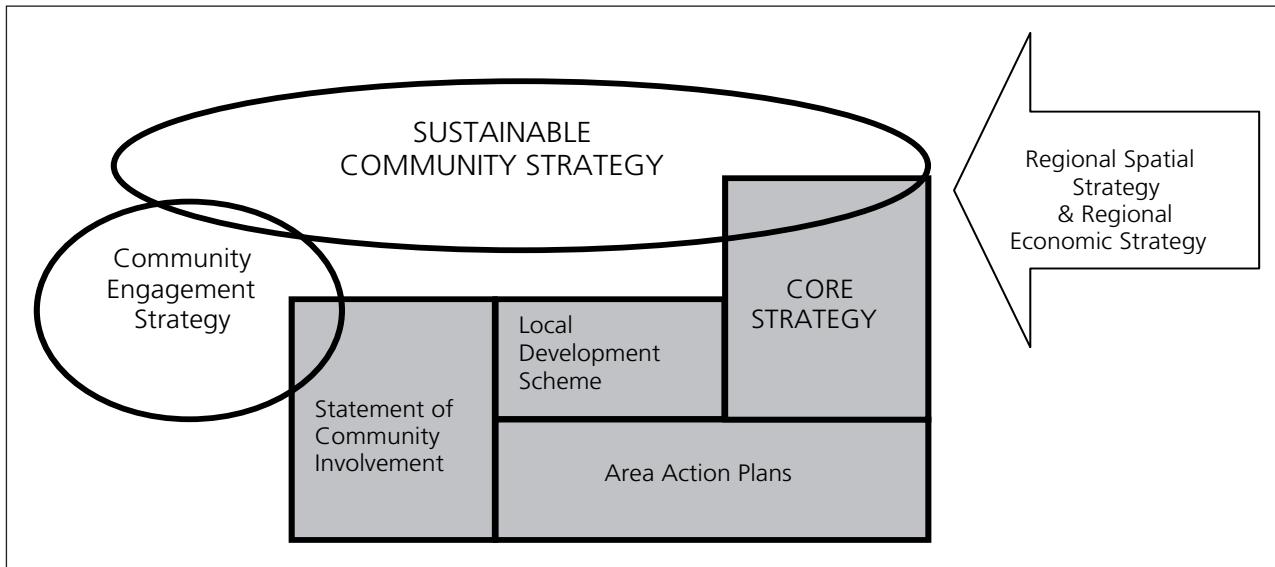
The LDF is not one document (as the former Local Plans were), but a more flexible system often described as a ‘folder’ of different policies and plans. For the purposes of this guide, the most relevant parts of the LDF are:

- The **Core Strategy**, which sets out the spatial vision for the local area in response to the SCS (taking account of national, regional and other local plans) and the views of citizens and local stakeholders in the planning system. The government is encouraging the integration of LDF Core Strategies with SCSs, although the former must remain clearly identifiable for examination by the Planning Inspectorate as part of the statutory adoption process.
- The **Statement of Community Involvement (SCI)** which sets out the ways in which citizens and stakeholders will be consulted and engaged in developing and delivering local planning policy. At the moment the SCI is subject to independent examination through the Planning Inspectorate for statutory approval, but the Local Government White Paper is proposing to rescind this requirement.⁵ The government would prefer to see LSPs develop a comprehensive community engagement strategy which can apply across the requirements of the LDF, the SCS and the LAA (although the SCI must still be a clearly identifiable component within the LDF).
- **Area Action Plans** which provide detailed planning frameworks for particular issues (such as promoting *mixed communities* or employment areas) or for areas of major change such as housing renewal, regeneration or growth areas, conservation etc.

These various documents within the LDF are prepared, and updated, at different times through a continuous process the timing of which is set out in an LDF component called the **Local Development Scheme**.

⁵ *Strong and Prosperous Communities*, Volume 1 (5.61)

The diagram below shows some of the component documents within LDFs (all the shaded areas), and the relationship with the SCS, especially the integrated relationship with the LDF Core Strategy and an LSP-wide Community Engagement Strategy.



The Sustainable Community Strategy (SCS)

Proposals for Community Strategies have now been further developed to take account of the Egan Review's recommendation that they be re-shaped into 'Sustainable Community Strategies'.⁶ The Government consulted on this change during the early part of last year,⁷ and the term is confirmed in the 2006 Local Government White Paper which describes their role as follows:

“The role of the Sustainable Community Strategy is to set out the strategic vision for a place. It provides a vehicle for considering and deciding how to address difficult cross-cutting issues such as the economic future of an area, social exclusion and climate change. Building these issues into the community's vision in an integrated way is at the heart of creating sustainable development at the local level.”

The SCS is prepared by the local authority with LSP partners and in consultation with local people, businesses and community and voluntary groups. Like the LDF, it must also take account of national and regional priorities (eg those of the *Regional Spatial Strategy* and the *Regional Economic Strategy*) and integrate with other local plans. The SCS balances and integrates social, environmental and economic needs and goals, based on shared evidence and agreed priorities across the partnership. The SCS should establish long-term goals, but also set short-term priorities for action through the LAA (described in the 2006 Local Government White Paper as the SCS delivery plan).

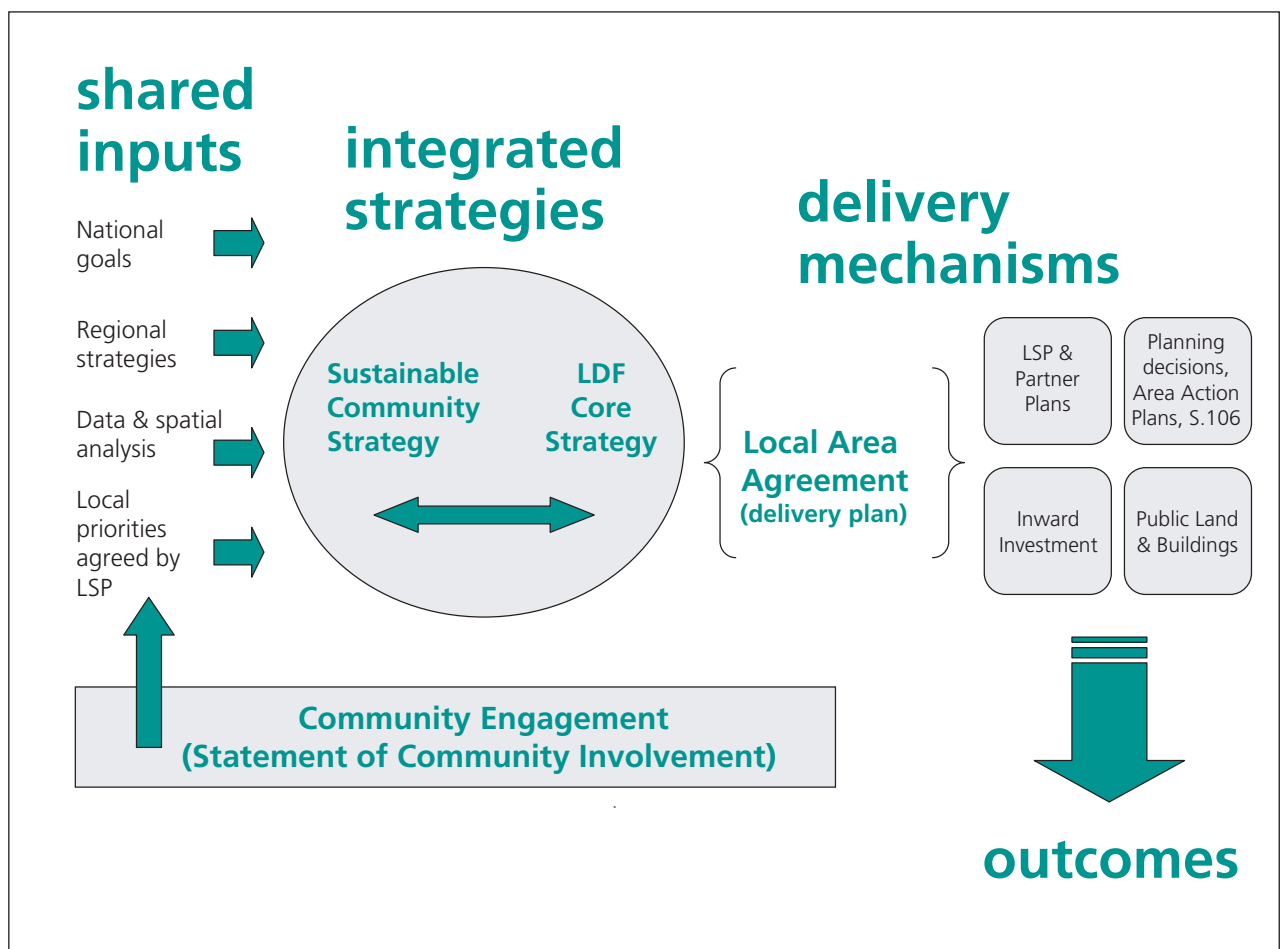
⁶ *The Egan Review: Skills for Sustainable Communities*, 2004

⁷ *'LSPs: Shaping their Future'*, December 2005

How do these two important local strategies work together?

We strongly encourage local authorities to integrate the Core Strategy of the LDF within the unitary or district Sustainable Community Strategy to ensure that the key spatial planning objectives for the area are fully aligned with priorities identified in the SCS.⁸ Place-shaping requires a dynamic relationship between these critical high-level vision strategies within both unitary and two-tier areas. This can be promoted through a shared evidence base and analysis, and the proactive engagement of stakeholder partners, citizens and local businesses in their development and implementation through a shared approach to consultation. The *Local Area Agreement* acts as the delivery plan and the policies and plans of the LDF are key delivery mechanisms alongside other LSP and partner plans, the use of land and assets, and the application of private investment.

The diagram below provides a simplified illustration of these relationships.



⁸ *Strong and Prosperous Communities*, Volume 1 (5.63)

Section Three

Improving Collaboration

1 Taking a Corporate Approach

Integration between the work of the LSP and the operation of local *spatial planning* policy through the LDF is vital to the community leadership role now envisaged for local authorities. The new system is based on the integration of all local strategies for place-shaping and quality of life. It demands a clear grasp of corporate priorities, and the priorities of other key local delivery agencies and public bodies working through the LSP.

It follows that both the responsibilities of the LSP, and those of local planning policy, need to be strategically represented within local authority corporate management arrangements, directly linked into the responsibilities of Cabinet and organised to ensure that elected members play an increasingly active part. The Government is proposing to strengthen the involvement of elected members in LSPs, with local authority leaders expected to act as or approve the LSP chair, and executive portfolio holders playing a key role on appropriate thematic partnerships within the LSP framework.⁹ The Local Government White Paper also makes proposals to strengthen collaboration in two-tier areas where local planning authorities are responding to County LSPs and LAAs.

The need to ensure a strong corporate and political profile for LSPs and spatial planning is further strengthened by several of the Government's new commitments in the White Paper, including:

- introducing a Community Call for Action¹⁰;
- allowing councillors to speak out on licensing and planning issues that matter to their local neighbourhoods; and
- enhancing the scrutiny function by elected councillors (including scrutiny of the named statutory partners).¹¹

For more information see:

Local Development Frameworks: Delivering the Vision

This publication produced by the Planning Advisory Service demonstrates how the LDF contributes to wider corporate strategies and the value spatial planning can bring to a range of policy and practice areas across local authorities and LSPs. It contains useful case studies and good practice recommendations.

See also: **Selling the LDF: a toolkit**

www.pas.gov.uk

⁹ *Strong and Prosperous Communities*, Volume 1 (5.17)

¹⁰ This is a new proposal (a development of that being introduced for crime and disorder issues through the Police and Justice Act 2006) through which local councillors can decide that the wider community interest justifies a Community Call for Action on a particular issue, referring to overview and scrutiny committees as necessary.

¹¹ *Strong and Prosperous Communities* (Chapters 2, 3 & 5), Communities and Local Government October 2006

Overview and Scrutiny in Local Government: a handbook for elected members

This guide has been produced by the Centre for Public Scrutiny which promotes the value of scrutiny in modern and effective government and supporting constructive dialogue between the public and its elected representatives to improve the quality of public services.
www.cfps.org.uk

The Politics of Place

Produced by the Leadership Centre for Local Government, this report examines why leadership of place is so important, and offers insights into place-shaping.
www.lg-leadership.gov.uk

Spatial Plans in Practice

The Spatial Plans in Practice project is a major, three-year study of the new local plan-making system and is producing a range of review reports and information bulletins.
www.communities.gov.uk/index.asp?id=1143238

2 Sharing Evidence and Spatial Understanding

The development of both the LDF, and the preparation of the SCS, can be aided by a collaborative approach to data and spatial analysis. Their common vision of place requires a common evidence base. Robust local data analysis and a shared understanding of its spatial implications is vital for both planning and service delivery.

To date, many Community Strategies have been criticised for their lack of spatial analysis, for narrow perspectives on the key drivers of change in shaping the future of local areas (such as housing strategies), and for their silence on environmental issues and climate change. Planners contribute the spatial analysis: collaboration with planners can therefore bring these issues into sharper focus and aid the development of more robust and comprehensive SCSs.

Improved data-sharing across and between agencies is being strongly encouraged by Government to improve effective service delivery and efficient use of resources.

For more information see:

Audit Commission Area Profiles

This web-based tool enables users to access data about quality of life and service provision in a local area, and to compare their position with other areas.
www.areaprofiles.audit-commission.gov.uk

Data4NR

This CLG website resource signposts datasets for targeting, monitoring, priority setting and performance management at a neighbourhood level.
www.data4nr.org.uk

Neighbourhood Statistics

www.statistics.gov.uk

Sustainable Development Indicators in your Pocket 2006

Reviews the national position relevant to the UK Sustainable Development Strategy indicators.
www.sustainable-development.gov.uk

3 Joint Monitoring across the SCS, LAA and LDF

A shared evidence base for determining local priorities has already been strongly recommended above. It follows that a shared approach to monitoring progress, and for accountability through performance assessment, can also be helpful in improving collaboration. The LDF is required to include a Monitoring Report prepared annually, and the LAA is subject to 6-monthly monitoring reports to GOs. There is therefore scope for collaboration.

The Local Government White Paper proposes substantial further development of performance assessment in the future, moving from 'Comprehensive Performance Assessment' to 'Comprehensive Area Assessment' in 2008, a radical reduction in the number of national targets and performance indicators and substantial reforms to the Best Value regime. These changes all signal the Government's recognition that the current separate performance frameworks for individual services can pull individual partners in different directions, making it harder to focus on developing a shared approach.

Clear, shared outcomes are essential for delivering through LAAs and for ensuring that planning policy contributes to improving quality of life. By collaborating on monitoring data and performance management, best use can be made of resources and the opportunities that may present themselves through the planning process (eg the use of *planning obligations* to provide or improve social infrastructure).

For more information see:

Strong and Prosperous Communities (Volume One)

www.communities.gov.uk

Audit Commission reports:

- Assessment of local services beyond 2008
- Securing Community Benefits through the Planning Process
- Corporate Awareness Checklist (for Section 106)

www.audit-commission.gov.uk

Local Area Agreements: a review of OSC involvement

Reviews the involvement of Overview and Scrutiny Committees in Local Area Agreements.

www.cfps.org.uk

4 Interlinking Timescales

Differences in timescales for the preparation of SCSs and LDF documents are often cited as a critical barrier to collaboration between the two. In practice, these differences are not insurmountable. There are opportunities for collaboration at every stage of LDF preparation, and it is never the wrong time to start.

Sustainable Community Strategies: It is important for planners to be clear as to the status of the current SCS and how any plans for revision (or refresh) relate to the timescales for LDF preparation (see below) and perhaps particularly for Core Strategy preparation or updating. Research indicates that over 40% of local areas intend to significantly revise their SCS within the next 12 months.¹² There are therefore substantial opportunities for collaboration (and it is clear that there is flexibility in the system to allow for this where possible).

¹² Results of 2nd round survey of local planning authorities carried out through the 'Spatial Plans in Practice' (SPIP) project (not yet published); see www.communities.gov.uk/index.asp?id=1143239 for further information about SPIP

Local Development Frameworks: Implementation of the new *spatial planning* system is not a one-size-fits-all approach and the timing varies from area to area. Local planning authorities are required to prepare a Local Development Scheme (as part of the LDF) setting out the timetable proposed for preparing the major components of the LDF. It signposts the different points at which it will be possible for the LSP to collaborate with the process. These might include preparing or revising the LDF Core Strategy, developing Area Action Plans and other site specific proposals, or preparing planning policy on strategic issues (including *planning obligations* through Section 106 agreements). Many local authorities are adjusting their Local Development Schemes, particularly as their grasp of what is required for the Core Strategy to meet the *Tests of Soundness* becomes clearer through the Planning Inspectorate's approach.

For more information see:

Local Development Frameworks: making the most of the Local Strategic Partnership

This summarises issues raised at regional LDF Action Learning Workshops organised by the Planning Advisory Service during autumn 2006, including many references to timescale issues.

www.pas.gov.uk

5 Co-ordinating Consultation

Promoting the active and informed involvement of local stakeholders, citizens, private and voluntary sectors is common to the preparation of the SCS, the various component documents of LDFs, and for LAAs. The Government has recognised the practical need to bring these requirements together and to co-ordinate consultation arrangements across the local authority and the LSP to ensure maximum synergy (and less confusion/fatigue for consultees). This will provide local authorities and their partners with greater flexibility in developing a more comprehensive Community Engagement Strategy and although a separately identifiable SCI will still be required as part of the LDF, the Government is proposing to rescind the current requirement for it to be submitted for independent examination.¹³

Many authorities are recognising that collectively the LSP is an essential contributor to the consultation needs of the planning process. The LSPs role as the 'partnership of partnerships' means that they involve a wide range of people and organisations, and can particularly help planners with meeting *Tests of Soundness* (eg supporting the deliverability of plans through synergy with the spending plans of other key partners, a requirement for both the LDF Core Strategy and Area Action Plans).

In this context it is important to understand that preparation of the LDF Core Strategy involves several stages:

- Like the preparation of all the plans forming the LDF, planners need to involve community members and stakeholders early on in the process, and the LSPs community consultation for preparing the SCS can be an important contributor. Many authorities report positive benefits from undertaking joint consultation, combining activities for the preparation of both the SCS and the LDF Core Strategy, not least the saving of time and resources.¹⁴

¹³ *Strong and Prosperous Communities*, Volume 1 (5.61)

¹⁴ For example, see the work being done by Sevenoaks District Council on their Community Plan and LDF at www.sevenoaks.gov.uk

- Planners use the results of this early involvement to understand the issues facing the area and prepare ‘preferred options’ for formal consultation, setting out the pros and cons of each option (using a technique known as sustainability appraisal) so that the public can see clearly the advantages and disadvantages of different strategies.
- Following this formal consultation the plan is finalised and ‘submitted’ to the government for examination by the Planning Inspectorate and final representations can be made.

The process of Core Strategy preparation can therefore take up to two years to complete and the LSP should be kept informed and involved throughout.

For more information see:

Preparing Core Strategies (technical summary)

Summarises the findings of the Spatial Plans in Practice research into progress on the development of LDF Core Strategies and recommends effective approaches in their preparation.

www.pas.gov.uk

The Handy Guide to Planning

A guide for community and voluntary organisations, and individuals, with limited experience of the planning process; provides a good overview of the planning system and helpful tips on how to get more involved and influence decision-making at both regional and local level.

www.urbanforum.org.uk

6 Collaborating with Parishes and Neighbourhoods

As the collaboration between planning and LSPs grows and strengthens, a number of other options for joint working may emerge. Perhaps the most important is the possibility of greater integration between governance and planning activity at authority level on the one hand and at neighbourhood, parish or ward level on the other.

There is already a well-established practice of parish planning in rural areas, usually under the auspices of Parish Councils. Neighbourhood action planning is in growing use in urban areas, whether as part of neighbourhood renewal or a neighbourhood management approach. At the same time, the majority of local authorities have established some form of area-based governance, usually covering one or more wards, which devolve some powers of decision-making and budgetary responsibility to the councillors for that area, but do not generally provide a channel for community influence over authority-level planning or decision-making.

The Local Government White Paper proposes an extension of the powers of some Parish Councils, and measures to encourage and simplify the establishment of new ones, as part of a review of community governance. It also encourages LSPs, as part of a more strategic approach to community engagement, to consider the wider use of neighbourhood and parish planning, the development of Local Charters, and the introduction of techniques such as participatory budgeting.

As the role of the LSP becomes increasingly important, alongside the strengthened role for ward councillors now envisaged, it will be necessary to develop mechanisms for ensuring that the planning and governance arrangements at different levels are also much more closely integrated, and lines of communication are clear. This should ensure that community involvement in neighbourhood and parish planning, in neighbourhood management and in other neighbourhood and parish activity is better placed to influence the SCS, LAA and LDF, both directly and through elected councillors. It should also ensure that area and other devolved governance structures, including Parish and Town Councils, are better placed to implement the vision and priorities set by those documents.

A particularly effective mechanism for achieving this coherence at very local level is the LDF Area Action Plan, particularly as such plans apply the wide-lens approach of spatial planning to quality of life issues as well as development challenges.

For more information see:

Parish Councils

www.defra.gov.uk/rural/communities/parish-councils

An Exciting Future for Community Plans

This report by BDOR Ltd was commissioned by the South West ACRE Network of Rural Community Council and the Market and Coastal Towns Association

www.swan-network.org.uk

National Neighbourhood Management Network

www.renewal.net/NNMN

7 Applying Sustainability Appraisal

As part of the new *spatial planning* system local authorities are required to undertake a Sustainability Appraisal (SA) during the preparation of local development documents. The purpose of SA is to appraise the social, environmental and economic effects of the spatial planning strategies and other local policies to assess the extent to which they accord with the principles of sustainable development.

A few areas have already begun to voluntarily apply SA to their SCS (eg Durham) and LAA (eg Cumbria and Bristol), and are finding this approach helpful in ensuring that the SCS and LDF documents are integrated and take a robust approach to sustainable development. Joint working adds value to the process, saving time and resources. Emerging good practice indicates that authorities do not need to create complex and detailed documents, but should use SA more strategically to help formulate and evaluate feasible alternatives and options in a clear manner accessible to the public.

For more information see:

Sustainability Appraisal of Regional Spatial Strategies and Local Development Documents

www.communities.gov.uk/index.asp?id=1161341

Sustainable Communities: a shared agenda, a share of the action

This new guide for local councils was published by Defra and LGA in 2006.

www.sustainable-development.gov.uk/advice/local

LAAs and Sustainable Development

This reports on a project undertaken by CAG Consultants for Defra aiming to support GOs and local authorities identify and/or negotiate LAA outcomes that help deliver sustainable development.

www.idea-knowledge.gov.uk/idk/core/page.do?pageId=5414089

8 Other Useful Approaches

The above sections cover the most important issues to address in order to improve and strengthen collaboration between local planning activity and the responsibilities of LSPs. Below are some simple practical steps that authorities are trying and finding helpful, or that are being recommended by other agencies such as the Planning Advisory Service (PAS).

TRY: Ensure the involvement of a senior planner on the LSP Main Board or Executive. Many of the LSPs involved in the Sounding Board for this study currently did not use this obvious mechanism for dialogue, and much of the research available, eg by the PAS, reports similar findings.

TRY: Prepare a joint presentation on the potential for collaboration (by the LSP Co-ordinator and Senior Planner) to the local authority Corporate Management Team, Cabinet and LSP Main Board. This approach is recommended by PAS as an essential mechanism to aid understanding of the potential of the new spatial planning system and its role in delivery.

TRY: Second staff between LSP teams and planning teams to undertake mutual tasks on the preparation of SCS and LDF documents; or co-locate teams.

TRY: Ask planners to use GIS mapping tools to provide LSP partners with clear spatial maps of social data (so often missing from previous iterations of Community Strategies). For example, GIS maps can provide a visual representation of the location of concentrations of disadvantage (useful for neighbourhood renewal and tackling deprivation floor targets) and how such areas relate spatially to the wider area, and to other provision (eg service location).

TRY: Put processes in place to ensure the LSP inputs to major planning applications. This is especially important in relation to developing a joint approach to negotiations on planning obligations.

TRY: Apply the methods of 'Health Impact Assessment' (HIA)¹⁵ to consider the potential – or actual – health and equity impacts of a proposal on a given population. Wherever decisions are being made that may have an impact on health and equity, HIA can provide a valuable tool to help inform the decision-making process at different levels and in a range of contexts. HIA is a practical process, procedure, method or tool that:

¹⁵ see www.hiagateway.org.uk

- predicts the health consequences of a policy and strategy, programme, project or other development on a population, and different groups within a population;
- influences decision makers by assisting them in the consideration of the implications and trade-offs of their decisions;
- involves stakeholders where appropriate, including public participation.

TRY: Set up working groups with members of the LSP and its Thematic Partnerships to help develop work on LDF Core Strategy Issues and Options.

TRY: Ensure local authority community development staff and youth workers are involved in developing consultation approaches for the LDF and SCS.

**the most important action is to make a start
this is new territory for collaboration
keep up to date with developments
and emerging good practice
(see next section)**

Section Four

Sources of Useful Information

In addition to the specific references provided in Section Three above, the following websites also provide a range of useful information in relation to place-shaping, sustainable development, community engagement, planning reforms and the role of local government and LSPs, including references to case studies.

www.pas.gov.uk

- The Planning Advisory Service (PAS) provides support to the local authority planning sector in England through briefings and toolkits to assist the implementation of the new spatial planning system.

www.sustainable-development.gov.uk

- Various guides and reports on implementing the UK Sustainable Development Strategy, including a specific section on advice and support for local government and a useful guide to 'Delivering Sustainable Communities with LAAs.

www.idea.gov.uk

- The IDEa works for local government improvement so councils can serve people and places better. Its website provides a major source of briefings and good practice studies and has useful sections on LAAs and LSPs.

www.renewal.net

- This is an on-line resource signposting effective practice in neighbourhood renewal and background to the *Mixed Communities* approach.

www.planningaid.rtpi.org.uk

- Planning Aid provides free, independent and professional help, advice and support on planning issues to people and communities who cannot afford to hire planning consultants.

www.ascskills.org.uk

- The Academy for Sustainable Communities (ASC) is a new national and international centre of excellence for the skills and knowledge needed to make better places for people now and in the future.

www.togetherwecan.info

- Together We Can sets out the government's plan to enable people to engage with public bodies and influence the decisions that affect their communities.

www.urbanforum.org.uk

- Urban Forum is an umbrella body for community and voluntary groups with interests in urban and regional policy, especially regeneration and they support community involvement in the work of LSPs.

www.acre.gov.uk

- Action with Communities in Rural England (ACRE) acts as the national umbrella organisation for 38 Rural Community Councils throughout England.

www.hiagateway.org.uk

- Gateway to the methods of Health Impact Assessment.

Glossary of Terms

It is inevitable that collaboration is often made harder because of the complexity of terms involved in public sector activities. The following Glossary covers terms that may not be familiar to all and that are not fully explained in the main text of the guide.

Local Strategic Partnership (LSP)

LSPs are not statutory bodies, but bring together the public, voluntary, community and private sectors to co-ordinate the contribution that each can make to improving localities.

In summary an LSPs role is as follows:

- To be the ‘partnership of partnerships’ in an area, providing strategic co-ordination and linking with other plans and bodies established at the regional, sub-regional and local level.
- To ensure a Sustainable Community Strategy is produced that sets the vision and priorities for the area agreed by all parties, including local citizens and businesses, and founded on a solid evidence base.
- To agree and implement a Local Area Agreement (the delivery plan for achieving the Sustainable Community Strategy).

LSPs have been undergoing varied stages of development since their introduction in 2000. In December 2005, Government launched national consultation on future options for LSPs and responses have shaped proposals in the Local Government White Paper (including proposals to establish a new duty for local authorities and named public sector partners to co-operate with each other in agreement of the LAA targets, and to have regard to relevant targets in the LAA).

Spatial Planning

Spatial Planning goes beyond traditional land use planning to bring together and integrate policies for the development and use of land with other policies and programmes which influence the nature of places and how they function. This means that whilst spatial planning is just as concerned with the physical aspects of location and land use as the old planning system, it is more explicitly required to address the various factors that make places attractive to live in and sustainable. These include social issues such as health, employment, community cohesion, crime and social exclusion. Spatial planning:

- integrates policies for the development and use of land with other policies and programmes which influence the nature of places and how they function
- is explicitly required to address the various factors that make places attractive to live in and sustainable
- is about places, how they function and how they relate together; and how good design in the widest sense can be achieved
- manages change to secure the best achievable quality of life for all in the community without squandering scarce resources or the environment

- requires the local authority and other agencies to work together to achieve agreed objectives to ensure that all local strategies affecting places, and investment plans, are effectively enshrined in local plan-making.

The new spatial planning system moves away from what can be called the old style ‘plan–present–defend’ basis of consultation to one of consensus-building, working alongside stakeholders and communities in vision and strategy formation and its approach is therefore based on enabling engagement at every stage of plan-making and implementation.

Sustainable Development

Sustainable development is the core principle underpinning the planning system. The widely-used definition of sustainable development is taken as “development which meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs”.

The UK has agreed five shared principles for sustainable development:

- **Living within Environment Limits:**
Respecting the limits of the planet’s environment, resources and biodiversity; to improve our environment and ensure that the natural resources needed for life are unimpaired and remain so for future generations.
- **Ensuring a Strong, Healthy & Just Society:**
Meeting the diverse needs of all people in existing and future communities, promoting personal well-being, social cohesion and inclusion and creating equal opportunity for all.
- **Achieving a Sustainable Economy:**
Building a strong, stable and sustainable economy which provides prosperity and opportunities for all, and in which environmental and social costs fall on those who impose them (Polluter Pays), and efficient resource use is incentivised.
- **Using Sound Science Responsibly:**
Ensuring policy is developed and implemented on the basis of strong scientific evidence, whilst taking into account scientific uncertainty (through the Precautionary Principle) as well as public attitudes and values.
- **Promoting Good Governance:**
Actively promoting effective, participative systems of governance in all levels of society; engaging people’s creativity, energy and diversity.

Local Area Agreements (LAAs)

LAAs simplify arrangements for utilising funding streams from central government to achieve locally-determined outcomes and improved service-delivery in local areas. The aim is to help join up public services more effectively, thus allowing greater flexibility for local solutions to local circumstances. LAAs are helping to devolve decision making, moving away from a ‘Whitehall knows best’ philosophy and reducing the bureaucracy associated with administering multiple funding streams and responding to numerous, separate monitoring arrangements.

An LAA is a three year contract that sets out priority outcomes for a local area as agreed between central government and a local area represented by a local authority and LSP. They are currently structured around four blocks of activity (or policy fields), but are undergoing rapid development, the intent being for all top tier areas to have an LAA in place by 2007.

LAAs are seen as a critical new tool in the delivery of quality public services, setting out clearly the outcomes to be achieved against SCS priorities, and providing a framework for scrutiny and performance management. Their increasing importance in driving public service reform is given further weight in the Local Government White Paper with proposals to increase the range of area-based funding streams included within LAAs, and for all LAAs to operate under single-pot arrangements. This will enable partners to work more flexibly, and to address issues that cut across all four themes (eg community cohesion and equalities, culture and sport).

Regional Spatial Strategies (RSSs)

Regional Assemblies (and in London, the Mayor) are responsible for the preparation of RSSs. The RSS should provide a broad development strategy for the region for a fifteen to twenty year period, and taking the following matters into account:

- identification of the scale and distribution of provision for new housing;
- priorities for the environment, such as countryside and biodiversity protection; and
- transport, infrastructure, economic development, agriculture, minerals extraction and waste treatment and disposal.

Regional Economic Strategy (RES)

The Regional Development Agencies are charged with drawing up a RES for their area and keeping them under review. In London the London Development Agency is responsible for developing an Economic Development Strategy (EDS) for the Mayor. The aim is that the RES is owned by the whole region and draws on the resources of all the major partners backed by a firm evidence base which will help ensure its influence on other regional strategies and policies.

The role of the RES is to provide a shared vision for the development of the region's economy, to improve economic performance and enhance the region's competitiveness. It identifies measures that will lead to an improvement in economic performance, whether the region is already successful or seeking to improve its performance. These measures can be targeted at a regional or sub-regional level, or inter-regionally, as in the case of the Northern Way Initiative.

Tests of Soundness

LDF Core Strategies and other plans such as Site Development Plan Documents (DPDs) and Area Action Plans are examined by the Planning Inspectorate for 'soundness'. There are nine tests of soundness, which can be broadly grouped into three types:

- Procedural matters, eg compliance with the Statement of Community Involvement
- Conformity issues, eg having regard to the Sustainable Community Strategy
- Coherence, consistency and effectiveness, including clear mechanisms for implementation (ie integrated with local policy and investment plans).

Planning Obligations

Planning obligations (known as Section 106 agreements) are an established and valuable mechanism for securing planning matters arising from a development proposal. They are commonly used to bring development in line with the objectives of sustainable development as articulated through the relevant local, regional and national planning policies.

Planning obligations can be used to secure the direct provision of housing, community facilities or open space or infrastructure required as part of the development, or through various types of financial contributions. The Local Development Scheme (as part of the LDF) should make clear the timescale for producing planning obligations policies so that stakeholders have adequate forewarning of when planning obligations policies will be reviewed or established, and a clear understanding of the opportunities they will have to input into the development of such policies. These opportunities should be detailed in the Statement of Community Involvement (within the LDF).

The Government has been consulting on proposals to introduce a Planning-gain Supplement (PGS) and the Chancellor's 2006 Pre-Budget Report was accompanied by further consultation papers on the introduction of the PGS approach:

- Valuing planning gain – a Planning-gain Supplement consultation (published by HM Revenue and Customs and the Valuation Office Agency);
- Paying PGS – a Planning-gain Supplement technical consultation (published by HM Revenue and Customs); and
- Changes to planning obligations – a Planning-gain Supplement consultation (published by Communities and Local Government).

These documents and further details on a Planning-gain Supplement are available at www.hm-treasury.gov.uk, www.communities.gov.uk and www.hmrc.gov.uk

Mixed Communities

Despite increased Government investment and improvements to the quality of services and outcomes in deprived areas, some areas still suffer from concentrated poverty and high levels of multiple deprivation.

These areas are often characterised by:

- poor quality (often predominantly social) housing and a degraded environment
- high levels of economic inactivity with significant proportions of families on benefits or low incomes
- disproportionate levels of crime and anti-social behaviour
- educational underachievement
- poor health or drug misuse

Improving the prospects of people living in areas of multiple deprivation in England
January 2005, a joint report between the Prime Minister's Strategy Unit and the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister highlighted three drivers of area deprivation; a weak economic base, poor housing and local environment and poor performance of public services. Securing lasting, transformational improvement in our most disadvantaged areas requires addressing these issues and drivers strategically and simultaneously. Further information is available on www.strategy.gov.uk

The Mixed Communities approach is about working with local projects to radically transform deprived areas into mixed and sustainable communities through:

- aligning a mix of housing, regeneration and neighbourhood renewal interventions
- a collective effort by public sector agencies
- targeted and sustained investment in service delivery and capital infrastructure
- long term arrangements with private sector partners
- a tight focus on the areas of greatest disadvantage while also linked into a wider physical and economic regeneration strategies and broader planning and investment decisions

Because of the scale of transformation involved in these areas, schemes will not usually be financially viable without substantial private sector investment. There is currently no additional funding for Mixed Communities, although many project areas are already in receipt of existing public funding and programmes; such as Neighbourhood Renewal Fund, Decent Homes, New Deal for Communities and Building Schools for the Future. Schemes attract private sector interest through utilising their land assets.

Further information is available on www.renewal.net

Appendix One: Sounding Board Membership

The Sounding Board met three times during 2006, in March, April and September.

Jamila Atom-Ra	Communities and Local Government, RCU
Faraz Baber	British Property Federation
Tony Baden	Communities and Local Government, Regional Planning
Noel Bell	Rotherham MBC, Forward Planning
Jeff Bishop	BDOR
Richard Blyth	Communities and Local Government, Planning
Sean Brady	Sefton LSP Parish Council Rep
Dave Chetwyn	RTPI, Planning Aid
David Cooper	DEFRA
Annie Cooper	DEFRA
Alan Cornock	Communities and Local Government, Planning
Jill Crumpton	LB Greenwich, LSP
Belinda Davis	DEFRA, Regional Sustainable Development
Cath Doherty	Communities and Local Government, Local Agreements & Partnerships
Frances Dolan	LB Greenwich Strategic Planning
Dawn Eastmead	Communities and Local Government, Cross- Government Delivery
Deborah Fellowes	Rotherham Partnership
Paul Gallagher	Newcastle City Council Partnership
Alan Gomm	South Norfolk Council (Planning Policy)
Denny Gray	Sustainable Development Commission
Ged Greaves	Newark and Sherwood District Council
Elin Gudnadottir	Urban Forum
Michael Hammerson	Civic Trust
Armana Handley	South Norfolk Council LSP Coordinator
Clive Harridge	Entec UK Limited
Chris Hayward	Blackburn with Darwen BC Planning
Stephen Hill	Beyond Green
Ben Hughes	BASSAC
Colin Jones	Communities and Local Government, Business Engagement Team
Andrew Lightfoot	Blackburn with Darwen BC
Ian Loughlin	Sefton BC Local Planning Team
Ian Lush	Architectural Heritage Fund
Kelvin MacDonald	RTPI Director, Policy and Practice
Steve Matthews	Sefton Council Local Planning Manager
Janice Morphet	University College London
Eamon Mythen	Communities and Local Government, Culture Change
Daniel Pou	Communities and Local Government, Cross- Government Delivery
Steve Quartermain	Hambleton DC Planning & Environment
Rupa Sarka	Urban Forum
Jonathan Smith	Nottinghamshire CC
Sam Swinbank	Hambleton DC Community Planning Manager
Marilyn Taylor	Marilyn Taylor Associates

Lorraine Thomas

Jacinta Thorley

Helen Walker

Louise Waring

Ed Watson

Paul Whittlesea

Maggie Williams

Val Woodward

Andrew Wright

Communities and Local Government,

Cross-Government Delivery

Surrey CA

IDeA

RTPI

Planning Advisory Service

Communities and Local Government,

Local Agreements & Partnerships

Sevenoaks District Council

Home Office, Social Research & Regeneration

Planning Officers Society