

# PLANNING Horizons

## Why where we make decisions will be critical in the twenty-first century

The Royal Town Planning Institute (RTPI) was established 100 years ago. In one sense, our societies face many of the same challenges now as we did a century ago – the need for quality affordable housing, improved public health and how to balance economic development with the protection of the environment.

In other respects, we are confronted by a wholly new set of challenges, such as climate change, demographic shifts (including an ageing society), the rise of 'lifestyle diseases', and increasing competition in a globalised world.

The RTPI's *Planning Horizons* papers, published during the Institute's Centenary Year in 2014, take a long term as well as global view of planning and the contribution it can make to some of the major challenges we face in the twenty-first century.

### Governance arrangements are key to dealing with twenty first century challenges

There are increasing public doubts about the efficacy of governments to respond effectively to the range of economic, social, and environmental challenges we face in the twenty-first century. To ensure better, more coordinated and coherent decisions for places, and so more efficient and effective response to the challenges we face, this paper sets out a new approach to thinking about the levels at which decisions are made by aligning responsibility and resources at the same levels of government.



The final paper in the *Planning Horizons* series explores how governance will need to evolve further if we are to meet the challenges of the twenty-first century. However, in many countries, including the UK, the increasing fragmentation of decision-making has made effective responses to these major challenges – such as demographic and climate change sustainable economic growth and healthy communities – much more difficult.

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## We face complex challenges at the same time as trust in government is in decline

*Making Better Decisions for Places* considers the impact of governance on a range of challenges and makes recommendations on general principles policy- and decision-makers should follow



- As part of any policy-making process it is crucial to identify decisions with a primarily national impact and those with a primarily sub-national impact, and put in place appropriate governance arrangements so that decisions can be made and implemented in the most effective way possible.
- In order to address major challenges it is essential to align policy objectives and allow decisions to be made on the basis of places where policies interact, rather than on the basis of individual policy objectives.
- We must also ensure that institutions at all levels are robust enough to make and implement these decisions. We need institutions that are equipped to make and implement decisions at local, regional, city, national, and international levels.

### A place-based approach to governance

Spatial planning emphasises the role of planning in attempting to integrate policy between different sectors and geographical scales, and breaking down departmental and organisational barriers. Ideally, planning can bring together different kinds of investments in single places in order to provide for the future.

This perspective can inform a new, joined-up way of thinking about how to improve governance and so our ability to respond to major twenty-first century challenges. This requires *aligning responsibility and resources at the same levels of governance* in order to achieve much more coordinated – and so efficient and effective – policies and investments for places. This would help to ensure that policy is more effective and would maximise the impact of these investments for places.

The full report can be downloaded from the RTPI website at: [www.rtpi.org.uk/planninghorizons](http://www.rtpi.org.uk/planninghorizons)

### The *Planning Horizons* series

The five RTPI *Planning Horizons* papers are:

*Thinking Spatially* (June 2014)

*Future-Proofing Society* (June 2014)

*Promoting Healthy Cities* (October 2014)

*Creating Economically Successful Places* (November 2014)

*Making Better Decisions for Places* (November 2014)

### About the RTPI

With 23,000 members worldwide working in the public, private, charitable and educational sectors, the RTPI is the largest institute for professional planners in Europe.