



RTPI

Royal Town Planning Institute

**RTPI
Research
Paper**

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AN AGENDA FOR PLANNING RESEARCH

**Key findings from the 2018 RTPI member
and stakeholder research consultation**



RTPI

Royal Town Planning Institute

The RTPI champions the power of planning in creating prosperous places and vibrant communities. We have over 25000 members in the private, public, academic and voluntary sectors.

Using our expertise and research we bring evidence and thought leadership to shape planning policies and thinking, putting the profession at the heart of society's big debates.

We set the standards of planning education and professional behaviour that give our members, wherever they work in the world, a unique ability to meet complex economic, social and environmental challenges.

This report is the findings from our 2018 consultation on planning research. It explains what the RTPI learned from speaking with hundreds of members and external stakeholders about the future of planning research. It covers the principles and aims which should guide research into planning, as well as highlighting some of the most important issues facing planners today. It also considers ways that the RTPI can collaborate with others to create or disseminate quality research.

The findings within this report represent the diversity of views expressed by consultees rather than the RTPI's policies. These findings were part of the process used to develop RTPI's [Research Programme for 2019-21](#), which will guide our research for the next three years.

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1. Introduction

From January to September 2018 the RTPI's Policy, Practice, Research & International (PPRI) team organised a wide range of focus groups, interviews, and surveys with RTPI members and other key stakeholders around the RTPI nations. The main goal was to inform the RTPI research programme for 2019-21. We also wanted to contribute evidence to guide planning research more broadly.

This report summarises some of the key findings of the consultation, including key topics for research and approaches to research. They will also be useful for planning researchers in a variety of contexts, as well as those who support planning research. We hope they will also be of interest to members of the RTPI who want to understand the issues their colleagues think are most important.

1.1. Methodology

This consultation drew on information from a range of sources including discussions, interviews or surveys with almost 200 RTPI members (see details in [Appendix A](#)). Sources included:

- The 2017 RTPI Membership Survey of 4225 members, which included a question on the top five areas they would like to see the RTPI working in.
- A review of previous RTPI research consultations and strategies.
- Focus groups with members across the RTPI regions and nations (14 groups in total, involving over a hundred members).
- Table discussions at the RTPI's General Assembly in January 2018.
- Interviews with 22 of the RTPI's key external stakeholders.
- Discussions with the Membership & Ethics and Education & Lifelong Learning committees (see [Appendix A](#) for their priorities).
- Discussions with all the relevant RTPI departments.
- Online and offline consultation with RTPI Learning Partners, RTPI accredited Planning Schools, Independent Consultants' Network, Large Consultancies, Planning Aid Coordinators, International Committee representatives, and members who couldn't attend focus groups. This involved direct feed in from more than 50 additional members.
- Current and recent RTPI research that engages directly with members, such as the Working in the Public Interest project.
- A selection of other background information including similar projects to this from comparable organisations and guidance on best practice in research and publishing.

1.2. Report outline

This key findings report highlights our learning from the consultation. It starts by considering feedback on the principles and aims that should guide our research. It then considers potential research topics and focuses within them – this was the main interest of participants by far and as such forms the bulk of this key findings report. Finally it looks at opportunities for collaboration.

2. Principles to guide the RTPI's research

We started off by proposing three key principles of Continuity, Rigour and Quality, and Inclusiveness/ Representativeness. After feedback at the RTPI's General Assembly, we refined these into **Relevance**, **Representativeness** and **Rigour**. There was widespread support for the principles from members and few challenges raised. However members and key stakeholders did have some suggestions for nuance within each principle, and introduced some other suggestions, as described below.

2.1. Representativeness

We proposed that research should aim to reflect diversity across Nations and Regions, considering both urban and rural areas where possible, promoting research between regions, and speaking with a 'common voice' on cross-borders issues. Developing a 'unified approach to research' that involves and speaks to various audiences, including planning professionals, policy-makers and academics. Again, strong support for the principle also came with ideas for improving it.

2.1.1. Geographical representativeness

'Regionality' of research

Two key findings of the 2015-17 consultation were the need for research to be relevant to a range of different regions, and the need to acknowledge regional disparities when drawing up policy issues. This was still considered to be an issue in this consultation. Some members reported an excessive focus on London and the South East. Others emphasised the very different needs of different regions. In practice we were particularly urged to draw out national and regional dimensions of findings, and to take account of regional variation, for example in housing markets. We were also urged to look for synergies with research activities in particular regions, for example research being conducted by local planning schools and supported by regions and/ or Planning Aid.

Preference for multi-country work

A preference for work which examines issues common to more than one country was a principle in 2015-17, and this also emerged prominently in this discussion. For example, we received feedback from Northern Ireland that all research should aim to represent or translate into the Northern Irish context, and that most of the issues we were likely to look at would have specific implications for administrative arrangements in Northern Ireland.

Role of the RTPI Regions and Nations in research

Several regions and nations fed back on the roles they might play in future RTPI research. This included both suggestions and questions. One suggestion was that regions can provide a focus for research and suggest case studies. A prominent question was whether regions and nations will commission independent research or feed into the main research programme, and accordingly

what process there will be for approving and funding research suggested by regions or nations.

‘Internationalising’ research

Rather than just focusing on research relevant to the UK, several participants urged us to aim to make as much research as possible relevant to the international planning context. Correspondingly this would mean focusing less on the UK statutory system and instead focusing more on the future of the planning profession more broadly. Practically, this could include coordinating with the international committee and officer. It could also include specific techniques such as focusing on international trends, integrating the UN-Habitat’s New Urban Agenda in everything, participating in international conferences, drawing on international examples, and comparing the international to the UK. This is also discussed in Section 4.14.

Tension: internationalising research vs practice relevance

Whilst there was support for an international focus we were also warned that this should not come at the expense of insight into the UK statutory system(s). There are lots of parts of the UK system which are unique, and some participants said it is important to develop nuanced understandings of these, even if this would be less relevant to planners outside those jurisdictions. This is also important to inform the production of practice advice. However it is not always one or the other – many key issues for UK planners have a clear international dimension, and by highlighting where findings are relevant internationally and where they are limited to particular jurisdictions, research could appeal broadly.

2.1.2. Other dimensions of representativeness

A number of members fed back that representativeness goes further than simply considering a range of countries and spatial scales. Other dimensions to consider in research include:

- **Inclusiveness:** considering gender as well as ethnic diversity and engaging with all groups.
- **Social diversity:** recognising the diversity of society and acknowledging difference.
- **Sector:** exploring different views between public and private sector.

2.1.3. Problematizing representativeness

There were no objections to this principle, however one response was that the planning profession has become so broad that there is a danger of losing focus. Thus the focus should ultimately be on ‘good planning’ for the most part, with representativeness considered but not central.

2.2. Relevance

We proposed that research should aim to tackle issues high on the political agenda or that were particularly important and pressing for planning. This is similar to the principle from the RTP1’s 2015-17 research strategy, that work should have an outcome in better practice, improving the political context for planning, or contributing to longer term thinking about society, planning and the profession. There was strong support for this principle across the board, and we also received a number of additional ideas for how to think about and pursue relevance.

Flexibility and timeliness

Several participants emphasised the need for the Institute to respond quickly to opportunities to take a lead in research, and to deliver new research quickly so as to maximise its impact. Thus resourcing must balance continuity on long-standing issues with spare capacity to deal with fresh issues. This includes responding to policy developments in each of the devolved Nations. One suggestion was to have a 'second programme' of research specifically geared towards current and reactive research, in particular to influence live political issues and reinforce the RTPI's capacity as a campaigning body.

Linking to policy and research agendas

Several participants discussed the value of linking up with other agendas. This included the research agendas of the UK and devolved nations' Governments. It was also advised that relevance should link to international policy and research agendas, and specifically to reference the Sustainable Development Goals and New Urban Agenda (discussed further in 4.14). We were also advised to link our work to the political calendar and the media agenda developed by the Marketing and Communications team.

Effectiveness and impact

Some members said that our research should be guided by a clear idea of the strategic objective the Institute is aiming for from the onset. For example positioning ourselves strongly on a topic can help shape research endeavours so they are effective and influential. Thus relevance must mean the ability to influence rather than just respond. We were also urged to monitor the impact of our research in the research community as well as in influencing policy and public perceptions.

Clarity

Several discussions suggested that to be relevant all research projects must involve producing clear and accessible reports and other outputs. This is discussed further in 3.1.2.

Linking research and practice

The 2015-17 consultation found support for research which assisted with the skills agenda for planning professionals, and this emerged again during this consultation. We heard that research should be linked to professional development and that research should draw on the expertise of practitioners that make up the RTPI membership. We were urged to translate as much research as possible into accessible and up-to-date practice advice with clear links to CPD requirements, working closely with practitioners to achieve this.

Internal relevance

Most discussions with members were welcomed as an opportunity to learn about and feed into the research work of the institute. Indeed one bit of feedback was that the Institute must focus on being *internally* relevant, by including robust internal debate at times to be relevant to its members. We were also encouraged to coordinate research with other RTPI activities. For example the Membership and Ethics committee urged us to link the research programme to planned membership research, for example the 2020 RPTI membership survey.

2.2.1. Problematising relevance

There was no opposition to this principle however a few qualifications were suggested, in particular the need to be pro-active and long-termist rather than being driven wholly by the current political agenda. The 2015-17 consultation identified a need for planning to set the agenda rather than responding to what other interest groups are saying – a more pro-active and less reactive agenda. Likewise during this consultation we were urged to get ahead of the curve rather than to fill gaps and to champion core RTPI issues through our research.

This also extended to not getting caught up in immediate issues and adopting more long-term thinking. For example we were urged to take a 15-20 year focus on housing in contrast to the Government's policy on five year housing land supply. This also links to the discussion of horizon scanning in 4.12. Consultees praised our 2014 Planning Horizons work for going beyond statutory planning and being forward looking.

Another nuance relating to relevance was the need to avoid viewing research simply as a lobbying tool as opposed to a key part of advancing the art and science of planning, a point which leads nicely to the third principle of rigour.

2.3. Rigour

We proposed a commitment to use, produce and promote rigorous evidence. Promoting robustness at all stages of research and a building a shared understanding around 'good research' to protect the RTPI's reputation and to promote sound policy recommendations. The 2012 research strategy emphasised that the RTPI is not just a pressure group – indeed part of being a learned society and an institute is developing the knowledge base of the profession and establishing an intellectual basis for planning. Many participants felt it should 'go without saying' that we would take this approach.

2.3.1. Problematising rigour

Whilst no one suggested we should not focus on producing high quality research, there was some feedback that a focus on the more dogmatic conceptions of 'rigour' could close down interesting avenues for our research. In particular we received feedback from members, including in academia, encouraging us to judge our work on outcomes and impact more than rigour. Our background research for this also included [a report](#) commissioned by the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) which commented that:

Research should be thought of as part of a broader knowledge ecosystem – especially where research is being co-produced, traditional frameworks and criteria for assessing research may not be appropriate. Some research must necessarily embrace flexibility, and focus on what is at stake rather than precise analytical questions. 'Rigour' should not necessarily be elevated above impact and practical insights. Things like informing practice and training should be key. Co-producing research with practitioners may be valuable.¹

¹ Campbell, H. and Vanderhoven, D. (2016), Knowledge That Matters: Realising the Potential of Co-Production, N8 Research Partnership.

2.4. Other proposed principles

Some participants suggested other guiding principles for our research. These included:

- **Justice:** the idea that our choice of what to research should be guided by an explicit reference to social goals, as perhaps supported by the direction offered by the RTPI's Royal Charter, to "advance the art and science of planning... for the benefit of the public". This is also discussed in 4.13. One suggestion was that research should aim to make planning a more transparent and equitable process by identifying outcomes, beneficiaries and those disadvantaged as a result of planning policies and practices. This also extends to conducting research in an ethical way.
- **Pro-activity, horizon scanning and agenda setting:** As discussed in 2.2.1 and 4.12, we were encouraged to focus our research on the future of planning.
- **Originality:** The 2015-17 work programme directed resources towards areas in which the RTPI can uniquely contribute.
- **Value for money:** We heard that the RTPI has secured good value for money in the previous work programme, in particular from working with universities (who often effectively co-fund the research). We heard that the RTPI should acknowledge this and explicitly sell the non-financial benefits of collaboration, for example that we will help the research achieve impact and provide access to members.

3. Aims of the RTPI's research

In addition to advancing and deepening knowledge on planning issues, we proposed that the aims of the 2019-21 Research programme should be (1) to offer a unified programme of research able to inform RTPI members, professionals, policy-makers, and academics, (2) to promote and disseminate research on planning issues as widely as possible (e.g. in the Media and policy circles), and (3) to encourage campaigning activities (when possible). Again there was widespread support for these aims. We also received lots of useful feedback relating to particular aims.

This chapter considers feedback from the consultation on how best to achieve these three aims. It is worth emphasising that each of the targets identified here comes with resource implications. Thus while all of the ideas mentioned in this chapter may be desirable to implement, decisions must be made about priorities as it isn't practical to pursue everything.

3.1. Informing a wide range of stakeholders

3.1.1. Who should the RTPI's research be informing?

It is particularly important to consider who research is aimed at, as the approach to research and the language used when publishing it has a major impact on who it is useful to and who it influences. Being clear on who research is aimed at from the outset is important both to reach required audiences, and because this focus should inform the research process and language used to present findings.

Members and informing practice

Most discussions related the importance of producing research for practitioners and some saw this as the most important audience to inform. The RTPI was described as being in a unique position to provide evidence to planning practitioners, since many have no access to or interest in academic research. The RTPI's 2016 report, 'A Planning Research Agenda for Ireland' suggested that priority should be given to research on planning practice.²

Planners were thought to benefit from bitesize, accessible pieces that focused on learning for planners. To target this audience it was also suggested that we could give CPD badging to the RTPI's research and practice advice.

Policymakers

A number of participants suggested that the RTPI's research should be mainly aimed at politicians, due to their ability to shape policy. This also applied to political engagement at all levels of the political spectrum. This includes local politicians and plan makers, civil servants in relevant departments, MPs and Lords, and Government and opposition ministers. We were also advised to specifically target parliamentary bodies such as select committees and to identify research topics and questions which they might be interested in. The RTPI should be a 'critical friend' to government, with a key role in aiding the scrutiny of policy.

² O'Sullivan et al. (2016), [Developing a Planning Research Agenda for Ireland](#), RTPI

We were advised that the most useful things for policymakers trying to make a case inside Government are (1) quality case studies, (2) short, strong, standalone executive summaries, (3) research with a clear and consistent strategic direction, (4) clear headlines backed up by facts and figures, and (5) delivery assessments and evaluative research. We were also advised that we should identify key decision-makers ahead of time, include them in the research, and then make sure a copy of the report gets on to their desk.

Research community and influencing the direction of research

The planning and wider-built environment research community are an obvious target for our research. In particular providing them with evidence which is absent from the academic literature and will help to influence it.

However, perhaps more important is seeking to influence the research agenda of planning researchers. We hope that the findings of this consultation can be used to influence the research carried out by planning schools, and the programmes of funding bodies. As the 2012 Research Strategy pointed out, the Institute is in a unique position and has a responsibility in promoting the research needs of spatial planning in the UK and Ireland and internationally (see also 5.3 on influencing the planning research agenda).

Wider built environment sector

Some participants urged us to engage across sectors relevant to planning rather than just planning practitioners. Particular groups mentioned included housing associations, professional institutes, architects, urban designers, charities, and the development industry.

The general public – promoting planning and the reputation of the institute

A number of participants saw promoting planning to the general public as an important goal. They argued our research should help us promote the profession as informed experts who can be trusted by others. To show that planning is more than just opposing applications and to make a strong case for planning as a positive force shaping society and the built environment. We were particularly encouraged to target young people, who are often unaware of planning and its value.

To reach the general public and develop our reputation, we were encouraged to make sure research does not appear merely interesting, but rather show why it is important. To focus on originality, hard data, and clear analysis, conclusions and policy asks. Part of this obviously includes reaching out to the press, who help to shape public opinion (see also 3.2). We were also encouraged to look at ways to reach people regarding particular topics. For example reaching out to the Alzheimer's Society and dementia friendly organisations when doing research on planning and dementia.

3.1.2. Creating accessible and impactful publications

We received widespread feedback that the clarity and accessibility of our research outputs is crucial to the achievement of all our objectives. This section draws on this feedback, as well as some documents on accessibility we reviewed in our background research.

Research reports are the main way in which we publish our research and will likely continue to be

the main output from most internal and commissioned research. We explored how to make them as accessible as possible, drawing on feedback from the consultation as well as guidance from the British Dyslexia Association³ and the Web Accessibility Initiative (W3C)⁴. We learned the following about best practice and different ways to reach different audiences during this consultation:

- **Fonts:** Sans serif fonts such as Arial, larger character and line spacing, and minimum font size of 12 along with larger sizes available on request.
- **Headings:** Consistent structure with extra space around headings and between paragraphs.
- **Colour:** single colour backgrounds and avoiding distractions. Ensure sufficient contrast. Dark coloured text on light coloured background. Avoid green and red-pink (colour blindness).
- **Printing:** matt paper rather than gloss and ideally cream or soft pastel colour paper.
- **Layout:** Avoid justification and multiple columns. Short lines and sentences.
- **Style:** Active over passive voice. Concise, short paragraphs, use images, infographics, and bullets. Provide a glossary.
- **Executive summaries:** Provide clear short executive summaries which can stand alone.
- **Case studies:** highlighted as key output for influencing policymakers and a way of telling powerful stories about research. We plan to develop more case studies as part of our Better Planning work.
- **'Bitesize' translations:** turning reports into short accessible pieces with data and graphics e.g. focusing on key learning for practitioners; 'top 5' asks for policymakers or the media (2 pages); one pagers with just one key headline idea and data; 'pros and cons' policy briefings; or landscape A3 slides of key findings which can be added to team presentations.
- **Sharing:** Make content which is easy to share on social media.
- **Printing:** there was some demand for printed copies of reports or summary pamphlets.
- **Digital publishing:** several participants expressed a preference for digital publications and in particular research which could be read on tablets and mobile phones:
 - **PDF:** One participant expressed a preference for well formatted pdfs and argued they are likely to be cited and shared in this form, however they are not suitable for mobile devices.
 - **HTML:** This basically means publishing reports as websites. This is particularly useful for reading on phones and tablets, and also has advantages for google indexing, sharing and general usability⁵ (see example [here](#)⁶). Pages should operate predictably and be easily navigable and readable. These would probably be normal RTPI website pages.

³ British Dyslexia Association (2018), [Dyslexia Style Guide 2018: Creating Dyslexia Friendly Content](#)

⁴ W3C (2008), [Web Content Accessibility Guidelines](#)

⁵ Ploughman, J. (2015), [Using HTML publications on GOV.UK](#), Inside GOV.UK

⁶ Centre for London (2018), [The London Intelligence | Issue 4](#)

- **E-reader:** Some other organisations now convert reports into Kindle- or other e-reader-friendly formats like .epub or .mobi. This is relatively easy to do using free software like Calibre. You can also upload reports to ebook stores.

We have also considered a number of alternative ways of publishing as part of this review.

- **Videos:** For example the RTPI North West are exploring 'Planning TED talks'.
- **Podcasts:** We have recorded discussions about research in the past but do not standardly do this for new research.
- **Webinars:** One key RTPI stakeholder organisation said they had some success with webinars to gather opinion, share good practice, or promote research.

3.2. Promoting research as widely as possible

3.2.1. Member desire for greater influence and profile for the RTPI

The 2015-17 research strategy consultation referred to feedback from members that the Institute should have a higher media impact. This was also fed back to us during this consultation – with several discussions expressing a desire to see the RTPI have a louder voice in mainstream media. The value of a local and regional media strategy was also highlighted. This was also however tempered by feedback emphasising the tension between focusing on getting research into the press and in front of key decision-makers, and the view that news analysis and campaigns should be priorities for media engagement over research.

3.2.2. How to achieve impact

Particular strategies for improving impact that emerged from the consultation included:

- Building up the media profile of the Chief Executive or other officers.
- Identification of, and direct intervention with, key decision makers.
- Building relationships with groups with the ear of political leadership.
- A small set of strong positions/ findings which are obviously attractive/ useful.
- Original research with hard data, clear analysis, and clear asks or a strong position.

3.2.3. Communication platforms

The Planner: In the 2017 membership survey, 70% chose The Planner as a preferred way they liked to get news on the institute. This was particularly the case for older members (80%). In the consultation we were also advised to make greater use of the Planner, to publicise research but also to provide research-inspired think pieces.

RTPI website: This was a preferred channel for 40% of members, in particular less-experienced (49%) and student (51%) members. The RTPI will be launching a new website in 2019 so this is a good chance to maximise its value for disseminating research. One suggestion was for a 'good practice platform' for case studies on the website, which we already aim to do as part of [Better Planning](#).

RTPI Member/ Network/ Regional Bulletins: Member bulletins were a preferred channel for 39% of members. We received feedback in the consultation that the member bulletin should be made more agile and readable, focusing on key priority messages including research output and impact. We were also advised to send out particular press releases to members through bulletins, with the National Audit Office and Planning Portal cited as good examples of this.

Social media: This was a preferred channel for 10% of members rising to 25% for student members. Whilst 52% of members were on Facebook, 44% of Linked In, and 29% on Twitter, the majority of those did not follow the RTPI on these channels. However social media is particularly influential in policy circles, and during the consultation we heard that promotion on social media was now essential. We also heard that it was important to produce content that is sharable on social media, and to make more use of LinkedIn.

Academic journals: The research team occasionally publishes in academic journals, and research commissioned by the RTPI is also sometimes adapted for journals by the authors. The RTPI also co-owns another journal, [Planning Theory and Practice](#). Securing more practitioner input into this journal is a priority. During the consultation we heard that academic journals are useful because they allow knowledge exchange with universities. However others advised us that the amount of work involved in publishing in academic journals is not always worth the effort due to small readership.

Other channels: We were advised by several participants to disseminate research 'as widely as possible'. Particular additional examples included trade press for particular topics (e.g. housing), college libraries, and targeted emails to key stakeholders.

3.2.4. Events

Events were recommended as one way of promoting research however they also come with significant implications for cost and staff time, and must fit in with the RTPI's coming events strategy. Possible avenues for promoting research through events include RTPI Trainings, RTPI Regional Events, and independent launch events. All three would require advance planning and coordination with other relevant parts of the RTPI.

3.2.5. Measuring impact

Several participants suggested the RTPI should be measuring impact to understand the effectiveness of strategies like the ones above. This might include statistics and reporting on the impact of past research projects. It could also include collections of media coverage, and examples of where research has been influential in shaping policy, or helped to cement partnerships with other organisations. One idea was for a monitoring system of audience engagement, to cover number of report downloads, tweet engagements, news stories etc. And for this information to be used to improve future dissemination. There was also feedback that monitoring would need to be over the long-term, particularly when considering policy impact.

3.3. Linking research to campaigning activities

In the 2017 membership survey, 87% of respondents said the RTPI should be a more campaigning organisation, even if they might not always favour the position adopted. This is a striking finding

and one that has encouraged us to use research to inform campaigning.

In this consultation members agreed that impact and advocacy should be at the heart of what we seek to achieve (see also 2.2 and 3.1). Members also linked this to our work promoting the planning profession, for example through research on the Value of Planning. One particular suggestion was to have a 'second programme' of research specifically geared towards current and reactive research, in particular to influence live political issues and reinforce the RTPI's capacity as a campaigning body.

4. Key topics for planning research

In almost every discussion, members and key stakeholders were most interested in the topics our research should consider. This chapter explores some of the main broad topics that came up, along with the various different focuses which were proposed for each. We hope it will be useful not just to RTPI but to the wider planning research community.

4.1. Housing

Housing affordability was a main focus of the 2015-18 research programme. It also took second and third place in the member survey of priority topics, with 25% supporting work on housing land supply and 22% housing affordability. It came up as a priority across the RTPI Regions and Nations and in stakeholder interviews.

Housing is a very broad issue with many dimensions relating to planning. In terms of the research programme it might even be possible to have more than one strand related to different elements of housing, or to recognise that some of these issues do not just impact housing. However we have included them together here as they are clearly all important to housing and planning. The following are some of the main issues identified by members:

- **Affordability:** this was considered the highest priority by several groups. Aspects included:
 - Need to consider affordability needs over housing supply *per se* including how this could be done in housing needs assessments and how that might translate into plans, decisions, enforcement, inspections, and appeals.
 - How planning can enable social rather than just 'affordable' housing.
 - How changing ways of working affect affordability (e.g. remote working, new economic centres).
- **Local authority housebuilding:** the role of planning in promoting public-sector led housebuilding and land assembly.
- **Housing land supply:** Identifying large sites, making best use of small sites.
- **Under-occupation:** Household life cycles, issues around downsizing.
- **Design:** Appropriate density, quality and standards as well as ways of promoting these and systematically measuring the impact and cost of good design. Also:
 - Co-design of place.
 - Design in relation to particular types of development e.g. urban extensions.
 - Sustainability and environmental standards in planning for housing.
 - Influence of design policies & evidence for this (e.g. post-occupancy evaluation).
- **Permitted Development:** in the survey this was a top issue for 10% of members. Groups discussed the adverse environmental and social impacts of deregulation, especially PD.
- **Development finance & viability:** 6th most important issue to members in 2017 survey. Both how to make more projects viable and how to make viability work for public sector.

- **Green Belt:** this came up in several groups and was also felt to be of high public interest.
 - In which cases should there be strategic GB review and how to go about it.
 - Key debates e.g. environmental considerations and trade-offs; transit-oriented development; greenfield vs brownfield/ compaction/ densification.
 - What is GB for? Purpose, quality and amenity value.
 - Improving GB e.g. for amenity value using new subsidies system.
- **Diversity of housebuilders:** How to tackle oligopolistic practices and support SMEs.
- **Community-led housing:** how planning can support CLTs, co-housing, co-ops, and alternative approaches to housing.
- **Environmental standards:** Sustainability and innovation for Planning and house building. Low impact developments.
- **The land market, land reform and land value capture:** 13% of members raised this as a key issue in the membership survey 2017, whilst 4% raised land ownership in particular, and it was noted to have major communications potential. Aspects include:
 - How to induce development without relying on expensive CPO powers.
 - Evaluating and exploring reforms for developer contributions (e.g. to capture more uplift, facilitate more social homes, meet special needs, and secure infrastructure). Understanding land value uplift and what happens to that uplift. Regional and national nuances in land value capture.
 - New or more comprehensive approaches to land value capture or taxation.
 - Impacts of concentration of land ownership and dominance of large developers on land release and quantity, quality and affordability of new development.
 - International land reforms – impact on local actors, legal status of land tenure, urbanisation patterns, concept of the peri-urban.
- **Location of development:** building on previous RTPi research and linking to GNP and Transport for the North – need to take into account location of new housing and proximity to key infrastructure and jobs. Also:
 - Tackling centralisation on London.
 - Evaluating locational sustainability – layout, connectivity, settlement capacity etc.

How to approach housing research:

Participants also gave feedback on how we should approach research on housing. In particular there was a strong message that a regional analysis of housing is crucial.

- **Affordability focus:** As reported above there was widespread support for the idea of focusing on affordability rather than housing supply *per se*.
- **Regional dimension to housing:** For example, affordability and land value capture were not felt to be major issues in Northern Ireland, nor was land supply in the North East of England.

- **Needs of diverse groups:** we heard that it is important to look not at overall supply or need but at learning about and reacting to the specific needs of diverse groups (e.g. concealed households, young people, and older people).
- **Linking housing to other areas of planning:** Finally we also received a message that an excessive focus on housing could lead to gaps elsewhere. For example some groups discussed issues with loss of employment land when searching for new housing.

Finally, some participants noted that whilst housing research is important, it should not be too dominant in the overall programme.

4.2. Climate change and mitigation

Climate Change was also a priority in the previous work programme, and came out as the 5th most important issue to members in the 2017 survey, with 20% citing it. It was also discussed in a broad range of the focus groups and interviews we conducted. Key focuses raised included:

- **Resilience and disaster planning:** how to prepare and respond to climate change and other hazards – this was a top issue for 3% of members in the 2017 survey.
- **Measuring impact of climate change policy:** developing ways of evaluating how national and local policies have worked.
- **Renewable energy:** 7% of members cited this as a top issue in the 2017 membership survey. One specific ideas was exploring local decentralised energy systems.
- **Smart energy systems:** E.g. building energy usage and distributed energy systems.

Coastal planning: The role of planning and its impact on recreation, environmental protection, flood defences, on- and off-shore wind farms, tidal power etc. Exploring local initiatives around all of these.

How to approach climate change research:

We received feedback from several discussions that framing is key to engaging in climate change. One view was that so much work is being done around climate change that it is essential to find an original approach to it. Another was that the issue needs to be communicated in a way that draws people in, for example focusing on collective action. In response to this feedback and other discussions we are currently framing [our work on climate change](#) in the context of Climate Justice.

4.3. Spatial governance and infrastructure planning

Devolution was the 9th most important issue for members in the 2017 survey (17%), whilst strategic planning was cited by 13%, and regional planning by 6%. Issues under this broad category also came up in most of the members and stakeholder discussions. They included:

- **Cross-council cooperation:** Operation and effectiveness of, and barriers to e.g. duty to cooperate, cross-boundary working groups.
- **Impact of devolution:** Combined authorities, city-regions and other options.
- **Regional planning** and integration of spatial planning with national and regional priorities.

- Intra-regional – how regional decisions impact borderlands and surrounding areas.
- **Data infrastructure:** Why is it important for planning, what data do we need, and how could it be collected or made more accessible?
- **Rural strategies:** Exploring joined up thinking for the countryside.
- **Strategic and long-term thinking:** Around core economic, environmental and social challenges.
- **Impact of new technologies on strategic planning:** In particular the ‘smart cities’ agenda.
- **Building on existing work on Great North Plan.**
- **Infrastructure planning and delivery:** This was the 4th most important issue to members, raised by 21% in the 2017 survey. Specific issues raised in discussions included:
 - Depoliticising decisions around planning and infrastructure by framing on growth.
 - How can cities and regions capture investment to an area?
 - How to get more spatial planning involvement in infrastructure delivery and demonstrate its value.
 - What infrastructure is most needed on a regional and national level?
- **Investment and funding for development:** How to secure funding for strategic planning and major projects. Including for international development e.g. with development banks.
- **Transport planning:** This was a top issue for 7% of members. Participants discussed the future of strategic transport planning e.g. AVs, Uber, electric bikes and social implications. Also the need for stronger body of evidence on policymaking around intercity transport.
- **Integrated housing and transport planning:** For example how these can be coordinated and the value of planning in linking housing, transport, and land value capture.

How to approach research on spatial governance:

The bulk of the RTPI’s policy and research work on strategic planning has been framed around the concept of ‘Smart City Regions’ for the past few years. One bit of feedback from the consultation was the need to be clear about what is meant by this since there can be a lot of confusion around what is included in ‘smart city’ discussion.

This was also an issue where participants in particular regions and nations highlighted the need to focus on particular regional and local examples.

4.4. EU Withdrawal and the future of environmental regulation

‘Brexit’ was the number one issue members chose for the RTPI to focus on in the 2017 membership survey, with 30% naming it in their top five issues. This was considered to be a particularly large issue by members in Northern Ireland, both in the survey and in the focus group. It was also cited as a major issue in a range of other discussions. This area can be broken up into two major directions for research.

First members urged us to consider the likely results of Brexit. The main feedback was a general

call to explore the impacts of Brexit in planning. There were also calls for specific work on the impact on planning policy during the Brexit transition and after Brexit, a review of current and ongoing regulation, and the impacts on funding, demographics, and environmental conservation. Much of this is already being explored in [our research on EU withdrawal](#).

Second, EU withdrawal acts as a chance to consider the future of environmental regulation in the UK. Conservation and the natural environment was a top issue for 11% of members, and there were a number of areas highlighted for possible research, including:

- **Natural capital and biodiversity offsetting:** Their interaction with planning and the impacts of different environmental assets (e.g. green space) on wider society.
- **Compliance with existing environmental regulation.**
- **Future of Green Belts and other designations for environmental protection** (e.g. AONB).
- **Air quality and planning.**
- **Area statements in Wales:** How they have developed and integrated with other planning. Area statements bring together data, information and ways of engaging others to help us better understand the state and trends of natural resources in an area, the pressures on them and their benefits.
- **Implementation of the Future Generations Act in Wales:** impact in plan-making, attitudes, ways of collaborating etc. Emergence and use of wellbeing statements.

How to approach research on EU Withdrawal

Regional and in particular National dimensions were thought to be crucial to any research on EU withdrawal. In particular we understand that it is crucial to consider the question of at what level new regulations will be made, given that many of the responsibilities in question are devolved. The same also goes for the future of environmental regulation more generally, with devolved Nations adopting innovative policies (such as those described above) which are worthy of study on their own and to explore how they might influence policy in other nations. Finally, a finding of [A Planning Research Agenda for Ireland](#)⁷, was the need for this kind of research to take an interdisciplinary approach, engaging with other disciplines involved in placemaking and environmental decision-making.

4.5. Health, inclusive planning and ageing

Health was cited as a top issue by 4% of members in the survey, and was also one of the top five issues cited in the 2015-17 research programme consultation. In the consultation, discussions of planning for health were sometimes closely related to discussions of planning for an ageing population, which was cited as a top issue by 11% of members in 2017, and inclusive planning which was cited by 2%. It was also noted to be a key issue for government. Discussions around these issues focused on areas relating to planning including:

- **Upstream interventions for health and wellbeing:** Linking health and planning

⁷ O'Sullivan et al. (2016), [Developing a Planning Research Agenda for Ireland](#), RTPi

programmes.

- **Evaluating impacts of policy around health:** Multi-dimensional evaluation of planning policy and how planning helps implement other policy, e.g. healthy places principles.
- **How are accessibility requirements embedded in local policy?**
- **Evaluating dementia-friendliness of new communities and policy:** There has been a huge amount of positive feedback on our recent practice advice on dementia and this was widely identified as an important area for the future.
- **Impacts of ageing population:** For planning and other key related issues (e.g. housing).
- **The needs of children in the built environment and how to engage children in planning.**

How to approach research on health, inclusive planning and ageing

As discussed above, health, inclusive planning and ageing were often discussed together. However some participants argued that issues around planning and an ageing population were so important as to be worthy of study on their own. Thus while it is useful sometimes to think of health and inclusiveness as a broad agenda, it is also important to drill down on specific issues within it.

4.6. Planning and the public sector

Especially given the context of years of cuts to planning departments and deregulation, there was widespread interest in the future of planning in the public sector. Resourcing of public sector planning was raised as a top issue by 18% of members in the 2017 survey. Local plan making was raised by 15%. There was also significant interest in the operation of local planning authorities (LPAs), with 15% citing local plan making as a top issue, 10% citing planning conditions and 11% citing local authority planning performance. All of this was also widely reflected in discussions throughout the consultation. Key issues included:

- **Planning fees:** Exploring what the 20% fee increase in England is being spent on and what impacts it is having.
- **Capacity and skills in the public sector:** What is the current situation – does capacity exist to deliver DM and policy and implement reforms? What role does the private sector play? How can capacity be developed? What is the density of RTPI membership? This is also linked to the discussion of the planning profession in 4.7.
- **Public sector planning abroad:** What is happening and what can be learned for the UK.
- **Leadership:** Leadership in planning and the status of planners in public sector. 2018 research on Chief Planning Officers was well received and this strand of work links closely with our aim to link research and campaigns. This was also proposed as a key issue in the 2015-17 work programme.
 - What is good leadership in public sector planning? How can it be promoted?
 - Are planners at the top table in local authorities? What kind of local authorities have planners at the top table? Advantages of having planners at the top table.
- **Local plan making:** this was the 10th most important issue for members with 15% citing it.

- The relevance of statutory plans in a changing world.
- In Northern Ireland the issue was framed in relation to understanding the NI transition/ emerging LDP programme and impact on plans.
- **Collaboration across departments:** Planners working with e.g. housing or economic development officers.
- **Planning performance:** Some participants said planners should be assessing the impact of planning.
 - Assessing local plans for flexibility, adaptability, affordable housing delivery and other key criteria.
 - How can LPAs work more efficiently e.g. on conditions.
 - The Scottish Government recently published research showing planners are rarely responsible for planning delays and this could be considered in the rest of UK.
- **Evidence base:** Appropriateness and proportionality of evidence base for plans/ applications.
- **Deregulation:** permitted development (10%) and planning conditions (10%) were top issues for significant amounts of members in the 2017 survey.
- **The Value of Planning:** There was some support for building on our previous research on the Value of Planning, whether through more research or impact/ advice activities. Ideas included:
 - Demonstrating value from a historical perspective – how world has changed since planning became a common response to societal challenges.
 - Value of discretionary system – e.g. by deep dive on particular applications and how planning improved them.
 - Economic value of planning including spreading VoP Wales toolkit elsewhere. Perhaps by giving it to local authorities to do their own calculations.
 - Social value e.g. impact of better public transport links on air quality/ health. Building in the ‘value of everything’ over just market making.
- **Politics and politicians in planning:**
 - Operation of planning committees and training of councillors in planning.
 - National political understanding of planning – knowledge of MPs/ ministers/ civil servants etc.
 - Public perception of planning and influence of political nature of planning – could planning be depoliticised or planners be insulated from political criticism?
- **Institutional learning and memory:** The currently high levels of ‘churn’ (the increasingly rapid movement of staff between positions and organisations) and impacts on institutional memory and skills. Can we quantify current levels of churn? What are its drivers? What are its impact? Can individual organisations respond? How can we respond at system-level?

How to approach research on public sector planning

As described above there was interest in evaluating planning performance and quantifying the value of planning. However, some participants qualified this by saying care needs to be taken to avoid this being used to create league tables for planning. There was also some concern about what kind of values to consider – in particular questions about the social value of land value uplift, and about how much planning could/ should claim credit for.

4.7. Planning education and the planning profession

Issues around planning education and the planning profession came up in a wide range of discussions. The profession was also a priority for the 2011 and 2014 research strategies. Research in this area also has the added benefit of being useful to other RTPI departments and developing our organisational priorities and strategy. Specific areas for possible research include:

- **Planning careers:** Understanding the makeup of the planning sector and why people enter or exit pathways into planning at various stages (e.g. school, undergraduate, masters, after graduation, later career). What attracts and alienates potential planners?
- **The future of the planning profession:** Changing ways and patterns of working, the influence of technology, new specialisms etc. Risks of de-professionalisation of planning. The skills of the future planner.
- **The values and ethics of the planning profession:** E.g. protecting land or promoting the needs of the country? Public reputation of planning. Current and future ethical challenges.
 - Ethical identity of planners in the private sector and journeys into them.
- **Inclusivity, diversity and gender:** This was identified as a top issue by 4% of members. The survey also found that more female planners had experience barriers to professional advancement than male. Research could explore how to make planning more inclusive.
- **Planning culture/ focus:** state of profession and balance between development management and pro-active plan-making.
- **Assessing effectiveness of existing CPD** for planners in general and the RTPI's members in particular. Exploring how research can be more useful to members.
- **Shortage of planners:** Reasons for difficulties recruiting qualified planners, especially planning technicians, and in the commonwealth.
- **The skills needed for modern planning:** Exploring how to meet skills gaps.
 - In the 2017 survey, members reported most needing to develop technical skills in: Development finance/ viability (26%) and planning law (24%). Then infrastructure planning and delivery (16%), housing land supply (16%), appeals (14%), EIA (13%) and charging regimes (13%), IT (12%), giving evidence (12%), urban design (12%), and housing affordability (11%). Participants in this consultation also indicated that geospatial, graphic communication, and rural planning skills were too rare.
 - Members reported most needing to develop generic skills in project management (19%), mediation, negotiation and conflict resolution (19%), budgeting and financial management (18%), management (17%), IT (16%), leadership (15%),

assertiveness (15%), communication skills (15%), networking (15%), and strategic thinking (13%).

- Participants in this consultation also suggested it was important to consider the skills needed for planning internationally in a variety of contexts, e.g. in informal settlements, or major infrastructure projects.
- **Ways of developing skills:** Exploring approaches to knowledge sharing locally, regionally, nationally and internationally.
 - Understanding how to develop and promote effective apprenticeships.
 - The role peer support could play in developing planners in all sectors.
 - Learning from abroad, especially from countries with very ambitious projects.
 - The potential to develop a platform for sharing good practice examples.
- **RTPI membership:**
 - Understanding the RTPI's membership density in public, private and academic sectors.
 - Role of the next RTPI membership survey in supporting research here (probably 2020).
 - Developing understanding of categories of membership (e.g. retired members).

How to approach research on public sector planning

Several participants emphasised that planning is a diverse profession and that there is no such thing as a perfect planner, so research should seek to understand a range of skill sets. As touched on above, there was widespread emphasis on the need to consider the future of the profession and what it should aim to be rather than just focusing on the current situation, especially given the impact of austerity. We were advised not to focus on skills outside of a context of capacity and practical context – planners have shown a remarkable ability to adapt to take on new skills where there is the capacity and imperative to do so. Finally we were encouraged to link up with other RTPI departments when doing research in this area, especially membership and education.

4.8. Urban planning and the future of cities

Members cited several issues relating to urban planning in the survey, including urbanisation (5%), regeneration (9%), and town centres (8%). It was also came up in several discussions, and was considered to be of interest to the general public, given pressure on traditional retailing and the look and use of the high street.

- **Town Centres:** How can they adapt to a changing economy.
 - Whether to support town centre development and whether a town centre first policy would be the most effective way to do this.
 - Impact of shift towards online retail on access to facilities and social equality.
- **Regeneration:** Issues around peripheral towns, challenges and solutions, declining communities, spatial disparities. Planning post-Grenfell.

- **Growth of cities and issues around informal development:** Especially in less economically developed countries.
- **Planning for university campuses:** In different areas (e.g. cities, market towns).
- **Future urban transport:** E.g. impact of shift towards driverless cars and active transport and impacts on urban space.
- **Emotion and happiness, and loneliness mapping:** how places make people feel.
- **Heritage:** 9% of members who responded to the membership survey raised this as a top issue, and the historic environment also came up as a possible focus in the consultation.

4.9. Rural planning

Rural planning was raised at a range of the focus groups, in particular in the North East, South West, Northern Ireland and Wales. Specific research areas raised in relation to planning included:

- **Rural economic issues:** E.g. poverty, exclusion, inequality, and accessibility. What has and hasn't worked to improve these.
- **Developing rural strategies:** Exploring joined up thinking for the countryside.
- **Lifelong housing in rural areas:** Considering inter-generational dependency.
- **Impact of planning on rural communities:** How planning helps or hinders local events, traditions, and sustainable development.
- **The future of farming:**
 - How can planning stop damaging land uses.
 - How planning can support farming diversification: E.g. tourism and social enterprise.

How to approach research on rural planning

In some discussions rural planning was raised as an important focus without developing into specific issues. There was also an explicit call for considering both urban and rural areas in research. This perhaps suggests a desire for research in general to focus more on rural areas in addition to specific rural research topics. This clearly relates to the principle of representativeness that should guide all our research.

4.10. Community planning

Exploring ways to involve local communities in planning was raised in a number of discussions, and 12% of members who responded to the 2017 membership survey raised neighbourhood and community planning as a top issue.

- **Public participation in planning:** What is effective? Obstacles from community perspective – what do communities want from planning engagement? Also engagement with particular unrepresented groups such as young people and future generations.
- **Role of community planning groups:** Exploring non-state representatives of community interests and their role in the planning process. Learning from activist planners.

- **New approaches to consultation:** How will consultation change in the 21st Century?
 - Role of new technology in consultation: What scope is there to develop and bring in new technology and data and what impact will they have? E.g. social media, virtual reality, 3-D modelling.
 - What should and shouldn't be consulted on? What is consultation aimed at and what is its value?
 - Are existing approaches, e.g. using newspapers, still value for money? What would be most effective?
- **What are other countries doing to promote community planning?** E.g. exploring some radical examples in the US and other countries we could learn from.
- **Raising public understanding of planning:** Legislation, decision-making process etc. How to increase public confidence in the planning system and related functions.
- **'NIMBYISM':** the social, political and psychological reasons for objections to development
- **Neighbourhood planning:** Evaluating and monitoring neighbourhood plans.
 - Why have some plans failed? Not just learning from the successes.
 - How to address tensions between local authorities and neighbourhood forums.

How to approach research on community planning

We were advised that were the RTPI to do further research in this area it must consider an interesting dynamic between the state and community – on one hand the state is both the representative and arbiter of the community interest, but on the other it may sometimes be in opposition to community groups and may see increased community influence as a threat. We were also reminded to consider that since it is impossible to involve everyone in decisions, participation in planning is not inherently good.

Some key framings were also suggested for work in this area. First, it being 50 years since the Skeffington Committee on public participation in planning. Second, the context of the Aarhus Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters. Third, anticipating the 10th anniversary of the first neighbourhood plans in 2020.

4.11. Planning and the economy

Planning and growth has been a key part of recent RTPI research strategies and 10% of members cited Economic Development as a top issue in the 2017 survey. Particular topics raised in the consultation included:

- **Productivity:** What spatial factors influence productivity? Why are some cities more productive than others? Why are medium sized cities, and towns, more productive abroad?
- **Value of Planning:** The economic value and cost of good placemaking and design.
- **LEPs and local enterprise:** Understanding how LEPs influence employment and sectors.
- **Employment land:** General loss of employment land, in part due to PD. Accessibility and

connectivity of employment areas and links to exclusion. Employment-led development.

- **Changing ways of working:** Impact of move towards different approaches e.g. remote and international working.
- **Link between planning and economics:** Understanding how capacity of planning is impacted by economics and economics of development in particular.
- **Planning as an export activity:** 3% of members who responded to the 2017 membership survey raised this as a top issue.

4.12. Technology & horizon scanning

A constant theme in most of the discussions in this consultation was the need for research to take the 'long view' and look to the future of planning. This was also represented in the 2017 member survey, for example of members who responded, demographic and population change was a key issue for 11%, planning for ageing population was a key issue for 11%, and e-planning and digital planning was a key issue for 10%. 'Horizon scanning' was also one of four core priorities in the 2011 research strategy, understood as mapping out key drivers of change and how to respond to them. We also received particularly positive feedback on our practice advice note on Dementia and Town Planning, which highlights the value of this kind forward thinking work.

How to approach research on technology and horizon scanning

Most of the topics raised as part of discussions on technology and horizon scanning have already been raised in this report, for example climate change, the future of housing and the future of the planning profession. Likewise, where the impacts of particular technologies were raised (e.g. social media, autonomous vehicles, big data, artificial intelligence, and digital infrastructure) it was generally in relation to impact on other areas.

As part of this consultation we have reflected on whether this should be a focus in itself, or a general idea that should inform all our work, similar to the principles discussed in the earlier chapter. In this sense a rule of always considering the long-term, and the role of technology, could be a part of all our research, rather than necessarily a programme of work in itself. All projects should think about things like the future skills needs, data infrastructure and demographic change. The RTPi is also already working closely with Future Cities Catapult on several of these issues.

4.13. Poverty and inequality

8% of members who responded to the 2017 survey listed Poverty and Inequality as a top issue. It also came up in several of the discussions, as discussed in various places in this report. The RTPi published a major policy paper on '[Poverty, place and inequality](#)' in 2016⁸.

How to approach research on poverty and inequality

As with the previous topic, most of the discussions that raised this issue linked it to issues already considered in this consultation. Again this was an issue that could be approached as an overarching theme of all our research. This also links to the additional principle of 'Justice' which

⁸ Victoria Pinoncely (2016), [Poverty, Place and Inequality](#), RTPi.

was suggested in the consultation.

One approach would be to use this as a framing for how we approach topics, for example when we consider housing we should first ask what injustices exist and how research could consider and be guided by them.

4.14. International research

International issues popped up in many of the discussions that made up this consultation. International Planning was one of the top five topics cited in the 2015-17 consultation. 3% of members who responded to the 2017 survey also raised international development as a top issue. Again, many of the topics discussed have already been noted above, encouraging an international focus on other issues, in particular urban planning and the planning profession. One additional topic raised was:

UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the New Urban Agenda:

- How do planners contribute to the SDGs
- Monitoring the implementation of the SDGs - what kind of indicators we need to capture. How will they be incorporated in the UK planning system?
- How can planning be used to deliver the New Urban Agenda in the UK and internationally?
- How can planning address rapid urbanisation processes and support emergency response?

How to approach research on international planning

Several participants in this consultation urged us not to silo 'international research' as something separate to our main research programme. This is not to say research shouldn't focus on other countries. Instead, it was a call to aim to make all research internationally relevant, and to include international case studies to inform UK-focused work. It was also part of recognising that planning is not a specific issue to the UK, but rather that the UK-system is part of a wider system of urban governance which reacts to international trends. We were particularly urged to focus on what we could learn from abroad rather than considering how our preferred approaches could translate to other countries.

Thus this again leads to the potential for 'international' to be primarily a principle guiding all our work rather than a focus in itself. As such it could add to the 'representativeness' principle discussed in 2.1. The same is true for the SDGs and New Urban Agenda. Rather than researching them directly we were urged to integrate them more generally in our work, for example by referencing which SDGs particular projects related to.

5. Collaboration

Members across most of the discussions highlighted the need to collaborate with other organisations. We also learned a lot about how some of these relationships might work through speaking to more than 20 representatives of different key RTPI stakeholders. The partnerships we engage must ultimately be guided by the RTPI's partnership strategy and joint working guidelines. However this process has given us a lot of information to inform future collaborations.

5.1. Collaborating to produce research

5.1.1. Commissioning research

The main way in which RPTI currently collaborates on research is by commissioning research on specific questions, normally to planning schools or consultancies. To date this has generally involved relatively small amounts of funding for projects (£5k to £25k, with more at the lower or mid-end of that range). It has generally been supplied by universities and consultancies, often in partnership.

We asked external stakeholders about perceptions of the RTPI as a research commissioning body. We were told that even where budgets were on the smaller side, there are advantages to working with the RTPI, which we should highlight. One is the opportunity of connecting with a large network (impact and recruiting planners for research). Some academics saw the RTPI's commissioning as particularly useful in allowing academic time to write up research for a practice audience.

We also heard about a number of additional ways we might commission research, including:

- **Open calls:** Inviting proposals within a set area or aimed at a set objective rather than inviting people to bid for specific research projects.
- **Competition funds:** Inviting a range of submissions on a given topic and awarding a prize for the best one. They could go to students or to everyone. They could be run by the RTPI or other organisations can be paid to administer them.
- **Co-commissioning work:** Working with funding bodies or other organisations to co-commission work. In the past we have jointly commissioned work with organisations such as the National Planning Forum and the County Councils Network.
- **Funding PhDs:** This would probably involve co-funding PhDs with clear links to our research agenda. ESRC run collaborative PhD schemes (e.g. with CIH), which generally involve the candidate working at the host organisation for a period. Some universities (e.g. University of Sheffield) also run schemes where students are embedded in organisations for particular projects.

5.1.2. Collaborating on research

The RTPI's 2012 research strategy stressed the value of collaboration in research in terms of greater impact and outcomes, as well as the fact that planning lends itself to cross-disciplinary working. We also heard calls for collaboration during this consultation, both from members and from external stakeholders. For example one suggestion was collaborate more with other built

environment professional bodies on things like uniform data gathering, mapping public space and bringing together different professionals in research.

Collaborating on research also means drawing on our members and other planning stakeholders in all our research. We heard that this could help identify local nationally relevant case studies and to feed into research questions. A key part of this would be stronger engagement with local members and Planning Aid volunteers. This could involve setting up a panel of members or Planning Aid volunteers interested in research and drawing up a list of things we want support with. Another way would be to make better use of the [RTPI Networks](#), which used to play a larger role in things like identifying case studies. Networks also sometimes involve formal collaboration with other institutes.

5.1.3. Supporting research

Many external stakeholders and members in academia were interested in how the RTPI could support their research. Our involvement is dictated by the joint working guidelines, as well as by capacity and how closely the projects map to our objectives. Participants were interested in things like:

- **Commenting/ feeding into/ endorsing research:** We regularly do this and this ‘peer review’ is assumed to be part of our role as a Learned Institute. At one end we might just comment on a draft, at the other we might write a foreword to explicitly support research.
- **Participating in advisory boards:** Again we are asked to do this a lot and normally accept if it is in line with strategic objectives and we have capacity.
- **Promoting surveys:** We have done this in the past however survey fatigue is a major problem so we have rules limiting this in the joint working guidelines.
- **Being interviewed for research:** Again we try to help where possible, giving priority to strategically important projects or ones led by members.
- **Supporting students and PhDs:** This came up several times in the consultation and was also an issue raised in previous research consultations and strategies. It could be supporting collaborative studentships, promoting student work (e.g. at RTPI events), or engaging with doctoral students and student members. It could also be suggesting dissertation topics or feeding into curricula.

5.2. Collaborating to disseminate research and impact

Perhaps the main interest of academic members and planning schools we spoke to was the RTPI’s role in promoting their research and getting it to practitioners. This is also a major interest of the ESRC, who have a coming research agenda around ‘Translational Research’, that is, exploring how research enters practice. This has also come up with non-academic members and in previous research consultations. The RTPI’s SPIRe programme was an explicit attempt to fund academics to write up their research for a practitioner audience. The RTPI is seen as having a key role to play in helping academics sense check their work with practitioners, sharing academic work in accessible forms, signposting members to research, and developing joint practice advice.

We also heard that the RTPI could be a natural focal point for capturing learning on practice, be

that academic research or learning from consultancies or other external stakeholders. Suggestions included hosting events on key issues to spread best practice, connect peers, and collect learning. Also using the RTPI website, publications and existing events programme to communicate research.

We were also reminded to ensure that the RTPI's positions are informed by the best evidence. This is another reason to use academic research and maintain strong links with Planning Schools.

5.3. The RTPI influencing the direction of research

The ability of the RTPI to influence the research agendas of other groups was presented as a major opportunity in this consultation. The 'research co-ordination' role on the institute was also raised in the 2012 and 2014 strategies.

Government and funding bodies exert major influence over research priorities by publishing research agendas.⁹ Influencing these could lead to far more research in our priority areas than we are able to conduct or commission, in particular encouraging a greater spatial focus. It could also make sure the needs and expertise of planners are at the heart of built environment research. There are also ways we could influence the priorities of individual researchers. Ways of pursuing this included:

- Reporting the findings of this research consultation to funding bodies, parliamentary bodies, ministerial and non-ministerial government departments, planning schools, and anyone else who wants to know what research planners think is important.
- Publishing our research interests on our website and encouraging others to adopt these and/ or contact us about work on them.
- Feeding into planning school curricula, masters dissertations etc.
- Looking for opportunities to set up co-funding schemes with research funders.

5.4. Securing additional funding for research

In recent years the RTPI has received financial support to engage in research, with recent examples including the [Collaborative Centre for Housing Evidence \(CaCHE\)](#), and [Working in the Public Interest](#). The Value of Planning Wales was also funded in part by the Welsh Government. Developing reliance on this kind of income can be problematic. However, it is clearly desirable where available funding aligns with the research we want to do.

One opportunity is being a partner on major funding applications, normally led by planning schools. The RTPI is considered an attractive partner for such bids because funders like to see evidence of how research will impact practice. One action here might be to draw up a list of 'in kind' contributions we can make (e.g. practitioner review panels, peer review, recruitment). Possible funders suggested included ESRC/ NERC/ UKRI, British Academy, and the Scottish and Welsh Governments. We could also bid for individual research tenders for example published by Governments or foundations.

⁹ See for example MHCLG's Areas of Research Interest, <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/mhclg-areas-of-research-interest>

6. Next steps

This report has set out the key findings from the consultation on our research programme for 2019-21. This is not the final output from that consultation – we will soon publish our [Research Programme for 2019-21](#), which will set out our final aims and priorities and the projects we will be pursuing in 2019.¹⁰

Nor do we want this to be the end of our engagement with members and external stakeholders regarding research. This process has been extremely useful for informing our priorities and perspectives. We hope to continue similar conversations - and we want to invite people to contact us to discuss what they have read in this document or to introduce new ideas or opportunities (research@rtpi.org.uk).

¹⁰ <https://www.rtpi.org.uk/knowledge/research/research-programme-2019-21/>

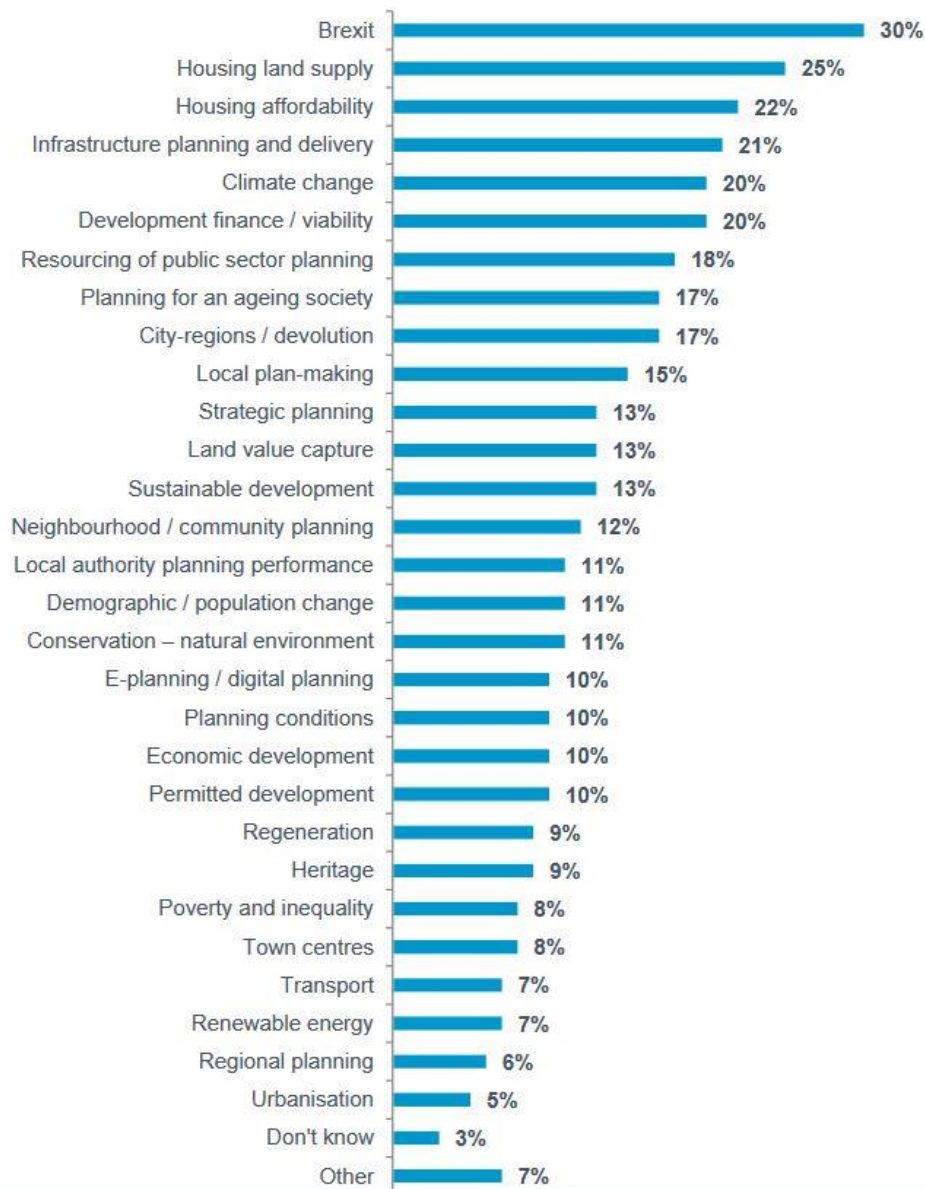
7. Appendix A: Sources

7.1. RTPI Membership Survey 2017

The 2017 RTPI Membership Survey surveyed 4225 members on a range of issues. One question asked about the top five areas they would like to see the RTPI working in. This is the only quantitative/ representative indicator we have of member priorities. However, it is worth noting that the question was not specifically relating to research and is more useful as a general indicator of the kinds of social issues members are concerned about that relate to planning.

Figure 1 Data from RTPI membership survey 2017 (respondents could choose up to 5 options from a list, or input an 'other').

Which issues would you like the RTPI to prioritise over the next couple of years?
Base: All respondents (4,225)



7.2. Background reading

We identified a number of documents which were relevant to this consultation. This included:

RTPI documents:

- RTPI Research Strategy 2012
- RTPI Research Strategy 2013
- PPRC papers from 2014 consultation
- PPRC papers from research work programme 2015-17
- South West Research Consultation (2014)
- Developing a Planning Research Agenda for Ireland (2016)
- Key Findings from 2017 Membership Survey
- RTPI Joint Working Guidelines (2018)

Other documents:

- British Dyslexia Association (2018), Dyslexia Style Guide
- N8 & ESRC, Knowledge that Matters
- RICS Research Trust Strategy (2013)
- Web Accessibility Initiative, Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (2008)

7.3. Member discussions

As described in the introduction we consulted directly with close to 200 members, as well as everyone who attended the first General Assembly in 2018.

- The majority of these were in focus groups organised in Regions and Nations, and attended by RTPI officers and PPRC members. Over a hundred members were involved in these discussions, including the following groups:
 - East Midlands Regional Management Board
 - East Midlands Regional Forum
 - East of England Regional Accounts Committee
 - North-East Regional Management Board
 - North East Rural Planning CPD event
 - Northern Ireland Policy and Research Forum
 - Scottish Executive Committee
 - South East Regional Management Board
 - South West Regional Accounts Committee
 - Wales Policy and Research Forum
 - West Midlands Regional Accounts Committee

- Yorkshire Regional Management Board
- The research programme was discussed at meetings of both the Membership and Ethics and Education and Lifelong Learning Committees (total of 25 members involved).
 - For M&E the priorities were: (1) Ensuring there are links between membership research and the research programme, in particular relating to the next membership survey, and work around professional ethics. (2) Other key topics including the impact of social media on planning, the status of planning, the economic impact of planning, and planning careers. Integrated in 'internal relevance' in [2.2](#), and in [4.7](#).
 - For ELLC the priorities were: (1) Creating bitesize briefings on planning research for a practitioner audience and the possibility of badging these as part of CPD. (2) Stronger links with planning schools. (3) Making the RTPIs policies as research-informed as possible. (4) Priority for research supporting the pipeline of planners, particularly through gaining an understanding of student destinations and why students choose to study planning in the first place. Integrated in [2.2](#), [3.1.1](#), [3.1.2](#), [4.7](#), and [Chapter 5](#).
- Officers organised discussions with the following groups of members:
 - Planning Aid Coordinators (group discussion with 8 members)
 - Representatives of the International Committee (interviews with 2 members)
 - Consultancies with major international focus (group discussion with 8 members)
 - Sheffield University researchers (group discussion with 9 academics, not all members)
 - Large Consultancies (group discussion with 19 members)

7.4. Staff feedback

Through this process we have sought feedback from the Heads of Membership, Marketing & Communications, and Education, as well as the previous and current Chief Executives. We have also received feedback from the Heads of English Regions, RTPI Scotland and Ireland, and Wales and Northern Ireland.

7.5. Online consultations

We invited feedback by online survey or email from members who were not able to attend regional focus groups, and also invited members of the Independent Consultants Network, Planning Schools Forum, Large Consultancies, and RTPI Learning Partners to feedback in this way. In total we received 8 submissions from members in this way.

7.6. External stakeholder interviews

We spoke to representatives of the following organisations as well as other key individual stakeholders:

- American Planning Association
- Centre for Research on Energy Demand

- Chartered Institute for Housing
- Economic and Social Research Council
- House of Commons Library
- House of Commons Select Committee for Housing, Communities and Local Government
- JustSpace
- Natcen Social Research
- National Planning Forum
- Parliamentary Office for Science and Technology
- Public Health England
- Planning Theory and Practice
- Royal Institute of British Architects
- Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors
- University of Sheffield
- University of Liverpool
- University of Reading
- University of the West of England
- Urbed



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For more information about the RTPI's research programme click below.

[RTPI Research Programme 2019-21](#)

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