



Strategic Planning

Invitation to Tender

September 2023

Contents

- 1 Introduction..... 2
 - 1.1 Background to the RTPI..... 2
 - 1.2 Background to the project..... 2
- 2 Tender information 3
 - 2.1 Budget 3
 - 2.2 Eligibility 3
 - 2.3 Project brief..... 3
 - 2.4 Methodology 5
 - 2.5 Project Timescales..... 5
 - 2.6 Governance 6
 - 2.7 Outputs..... 6
 - 2.8 Application process 6
 - 2.9 Evaluation criteria 7
 - 2.10 Assessment panel & steering group..... 7
 - 2.11 Deadlines for applications..... 7
 - 2.12 Intellectual property..... 7
- 3 Further information and enquiries..... 7

1 Introduction

1.1 Background to the RTPI

The Royal Town Planning Institute (RTPI) is the UK's leading planning body for spatial, sustainable and inclusive planning and is the largest planning institute in Europe with over 27,000 members. In England, the RTPI's membership is represented through elected regional bodies, three of which are providing the funding for this research. The RTPI also has national bodies representing Wales, Scotland, Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland, as well as an international representation and stream of work.

The RTPI is:

- A membership organisation and a Chartered Institute responsible for maintaining professional standards and accrediting world class planning courses nationally and internationally.
- A charity whose constitutional purpose is *to advance the science and art of planning (including town and country and spatial planning) for the benefit of the public.*
- A learned society.

To this end, the RTPI promotes research into planning practice, theory, policy development and education. The RTPI's strategic research agenda in the UK aims to:

- Promote the funding and dissemination of research and project activity informing and evaluating planning policy and practice.
- Promote awareness and engagement of planning practitioners in planning research at local, national and international scales.
- Encourage interdisciplinary and inter-sectoral research and dialogue.
- Support research in planning education and lifelong learning.

1.2 Background to the project

Strategic planning refers to the coordination of different geographical and administrative scales of planning, as well as the integration and coordination of different sectors of planning, such as transport, housing and economic development. Strategic planning is a means to addressing larger-than-local challenges, including improving housing quantity and quality, developing green energy generation, and supra-regional economic rebalancing ('levelling-up'). One potential effect of successful strategic planning is to mediate between the national scale of policy and legislation, and the place-based specificity of local communities.

The effective administration of strategic planning necessarily involves resolving conflict and compromise between the competing interests of different authorities. Effective strategic planning involves the formalisation of cooperation mechanisms, the mediation of leadership, partnership and vision. Effective strategic planning also 'has teeth' in that it also has the power to arbitrate when conflict arises.

Existing and incoming policy measures that in one way or another address planning above the LPA level include Spatial Development Strategies, the lately deprecated Duty to Cooperate, some

Devolution Deals and NDMPs. This is a shifting policy environment which is further complicated by the expected 2024 General Election. It looks increasingly like one of the central themes of political campaigns will be planning reform and the housing crisis.

The absence of effective strategic planning is particularly visible at present, notably in the increasing shortfall of housebuilding, the slow outlay of infrastructure to support net zero, and in the limited ability of the devolution and levelling-up agendas to address this thorny issue. The progression of local devolution deals in England offers a potential avenue towards more effective strategic planning, and there is a risk of this being a missed opportunity. The RTPI is seeking to leverage its influence and role at this important moment to commission innovative, fresh-thinking research on the current situation and future of strategic planning in England.

The RTPI last published research on strategic planning in 2015, [Strategic Planning: Effective Cooperation for Planning Across Boundaries](#) – a report on the obstacles and opportunities facing local authorities in the then-present policy environment, consulting a range of case studies. The aim of the new research paper is to build on the 2015 results and provide timely analysis that will further the understanding of the possibilities of strategic planning in 2023 and future years. Also of relevance is the research published in 2022 on [Planning Agencies: Empowering Public Sector Planning](#) and in 2021 on [Green Growth Boards](#). This advocated for a voluntary, shared services model that local planning authorities can use to do more with less.

2 Tender information

2.1 Budget

This project will be funded up to a maximum of **£30,000 (to include all disbursements and including VAT)**, with the intention that this be paid in three equal instalments according to agreed project milestones (i.e. on signing of the contract, delivery of the draft report and delivery of the final report to an acceptable quality standard).

Three RTPI regions, representing members in different parts of England, have each contributed equally to this budget: North-West, Yorkshire and North-East. The tendering and research management process is being managed by London-based RTPI officers.

2.2 Eligibility

Tenders are invited from RTPI accredited planning schools, other university-based research teams/departments, planning consultancies and other appropriate organisations, particularly those which can demonstrate expertise in planning and public policy. Collaboration between organisations is welcome.

2.3 Project brief

We are interested in the costs resulting from the absence of strategic planning today, the barriers to effective strategic planning, and examples of best practice approaches to strategic planning within current policy frameworks. We want to better understand the demand and potential demand for more effective strategic planning, and how strategic planning could contribute to solving wider societal challenges. Bidders are required to propose research collecting and analysing evidence on

the likely impact of recent and possible policy interventions/reforms on the realisation of effective strategic planning. We expect that the published research will help to influence policy discussion laying the groundwork for effective strategic planning within the current devolution agenda and related policy developments.

We encourage research which focusses on what the experience has been of strategic planning in the North of England, which has seen recent efforts at strategic planning associated with Combined Authorities. Any bids which do not show close reference to the North of England will require strong justification for the choice of alternative focus. The target audience is national and local policymakers; the remit of applicability for the research is the whole of England, and any recommendations and findings should concern or be of relevance to other regions of England as much as the North of England.

Bidders should show how they will conduct research to collect evidence which examines issues relating to strategic planning. The following are possible prompts:

1. Why is strategic planning necessary, and what makes strategic planning more or less effective? How likely would effective strategic planning be to contribute to addressing contemporary challenges such as (but not limited to):
 - a. tackling climate change;
 - b. responding to changing patterns of work;
 - c. enhancing resilient infrastructure development;
 - d. enhancing housing delivery;
 - e. developing and maintaining desirable urban form/ locationally structured development.
2. The efficacy (in relation to 1 and otherwise) and potential of current and recent attempts at strategic planning:
 - a. the policy context and approach for achieving strategic planning;
 - b. the present barriers, within the current policy context, to achieving strategic planning;
 - c. the extent of piecemeal or non-strategic planning;
 - d. the wider benefits which are lost as a result of any piecemeal or non-strategic planning;
 - e. the potential future benefits which would arise as a result of rectifying the present barriers to strategic planning.
3. The types of reform to the administration of planning which would enable effective strategic planning in the future:
 - a. How great is the potential of the current policy context (local devolution deals, combined authorities, unitarization etc.) to support effective strategic planning?
 - b. Are Spatial Development Strategies an effective and feasible means to strategic planning?

- c. Why have the majority of devolution deals not been accompanied by Spatial Development Strategies? Is there a means by which devolution can progress to include planning powers in areas where these were not at first devolved?
 - d. What reforms to policy are necessary to incentivise effective strategic planning?
 4. How do current and upcoming policy instruments enable planners to address the points identified? Regarding the below, are they fulfilling their function? Could they be expanded/enhanced? Where are formal or statutory plans justified and necessary?
 - a. Devolution Deals which involve plan-making powers i.e. Spatial Development Strategies;
 - b. Combined Authority application decision-making powers, such as Mayoral call-in powers;
 - c. Voluntary super-local plans of a strategic nature e.g. Greater Manchester Spatial Framework (“Places for Everyone”);
 - d. National Development Management Policies.
 5. Strategic planning is often contested in local politics. What policy interventions could help foster more coordinated, vision-led plan-making, incentivising alignment and collaboration, and enabling the development of strong local leadership?
 6. What went wrong with previous approaches to strategic planning? What are the next steps for strategic planning in the 2020s? How can we ensure that any policy machinery to ensure effective strategic planning has institutional support and longevity?

2.4 Methodology

We do not wish to delimit the methodology used for this study; potential suppliers should justify their proposed methodology as part of their tender documents, explaining its merit and suitability. We welcome a mixture of quantitative and qualitative research methods. We welcome the use of case studies in the North of England and elsewhere.

2.5 Project Timescales

The research is time sensitive. The Levelling Up Bill proposes to abolish the Duty to Cooperate, and the upcoming electoral campaigns seem to be focusing heavily on housing targets and the planning system. In light of this, the following milestones are proposed:

- 4 September 2023 – opening competitive tender;
- 1 October 2023 – closing tender;
- 15 October 2023 – deadline for interviews and supplier selection process;
- 4 February 2024 – deadline for supplier to send draft/preliminary interim publication;
- 1 March 2024 – deadline for interim publication, in time for Planner Live North 2024;

- 1 June 2024 – publication of final report.

The precise timescale for the project will be determined in collaboration with the selected research team during the inception meeting.

2.6 Governance

The day-to-day project manager at the RTPI will be David Mountain, Research Manager.

The RTPI will establish a client Steering Group which will provide representation from Institute staff and members representing funding regions. There will also be a reference group which will act as a sounding board to the project comprising RTPI Members with interests in strategic planning. A member of the academic community and a correspondent in the Department of Levelling up and Communities will be asked on an invitation basis to oversee the project. Their involvement is expected at the beginning (tendering) and at the end (review and feedback).

2.7 Outputs

- Produce a report which identifies the current challenges to realising effective strategic planning in 2023, and identifies possible solutions.
- Produce evidence-based research into the planning policy and practice changes which may be required to implement effective strategic planning at various scales of governance.
- Identify case study locations that demonstrate the project's findings and illustrate hopeful and best practices.
- Provide quantitative findings in digestible and media-friendly formats (e.g. infographics) both within the report and as separate files to the report in order to help us to share key findings.
- Attendance, as required by the RTPI, to promote the research in the year following publication.

2.8 Application process

Organisations/project teams should submit a tender document that includes:

- Proposed methodology;
- Proposed outputs, demonstrating conformity (or otherwise, with rationale) with the project purpose and brief described in Section 2.3 of this document;
- Project team and general experience;
- Statement of experience relevant to the project, and selected projects that demonstrate relevant experience;
- Proposed approach to project management, identifying risks and mitigation strategies, and specifying how the project will be delivered on time and to a high standard;
- Total cost of the project;

- A budget breakdown between the stages, daily rates and personnel inputs.

2.9 Evaluation criteria

Applications will be evaluated against five criteria:

1. Quality, rigour and depth of the proposed methodology and analysis;
2. Experience/track record/knowledge of research and/or project delivery relevant to the project;
3. Experience of effective and impactful partnership working (i.e. with project commissioners and/or public stakeholders);
4. Experience of managing politically-sensitive projects;
5. Value for money and added value.

2.10 Assessment panel & steering group

The assessment panel will comprise up to six members of the steering group.

2.11 Deadlines for applications

Tender applications should be submitted electronically to: research@rtpi.org.uk

The deadline for applications is **23:59 (UTC+1) Sunday 8th October 2023**.

We intend to interview a shortlist of bidders during **w/c 16 October 2023** and to appoint the successful research team soon after.

2.12 Intellectual property

The RTPI will retain ownership of the work but will grant the researchers the right to publish and re-use the material submitted to RTPI and will be fully credited for their work. Respective consultancies and institutions should not apply if they will not be able to agree to this provision. They should acknowledge the support from the RTPI in any subsequent publications and activity based on the supported projects.

Any outcome from the project shall remain strictly **CONFIDENTIAL** until such time as the RTPI determines that it be released for publication.

3 Further information and enquiries

We welcome enquiries about this project. Responses will be issued as anonymised Q&A's on our website, and sent to those who have notified us of their intention to bid.

Please contact: David Mountain, Research Manager

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