

7. PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT SERVICES

7.1 Introduction and background

Planning and development issues are currently undertaken by both the county and district councils. The county council is a “strategic planning authority” in relation to the preparation of advice to the South West Regional Assembly (SWRA) for Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS). The county council is the Minerals and Waste Planning Authority (MWPA) for the preparation of Minerals and Waste Development Frameworks as well as having responsibility for minerals and waste planning applications and its own development (eg schools, roads etc). The districts are responsible for the preparation for Local Development Frameworks (LDFs) and most development decisions.

We believe that the unification of planning within a single structure for Cornwall will achieve very significant benefits at a strategic and local level and we have explored these in a separate case study (case study 5). The main issues arising are set out overleaf.



a strong sustainable community for one and all

7.2 Local Development Frameworks

The current issues

The resources and capacity to prepare and deliver Local Development Frameworks across Cornwall is a fundamental issue. The resources available to individual district councils limit progress towards the Government's aim of a speedier, simpler and "plan led" planning process. The consequences of this are very significant and impact on the proper planning of the area in a number of ways, including:

- the delivery of housing, economic and other development needs
- the integration and delivery of Convergence Programme
- implementation of RSS/Structure plan policy at the local level
- the involvement of communities in shaping development in their area
- ensuring development is sustainable, is to a high design standard, and respects environmental assets
- providing more certainty for business, infrastructure and service providers

At the same time the resources within individual authorities limit the scope to widen the role of the planning service to meet other objectives of the Government's Planning Reforms, including

- real and meaningful community involvement
- robustly justified evidence based policies
- planning as a key tool in delivering the vision for the area and addressing the spatial implications of other programmes and strategies.

The existing two tier structure does not enable best use or most efficient use of resources. To-date there has been limited progress on joint working and the system works against delivering key area priorities for Local Development Document (LDD) preparation and responding to cross boundary issues.

Opportunities for Improvements

In summary, key opportunities for improvement are:

- A single core strategy to provide the framework for LDDs and Action Area Plans
- The unnecessary duplication of LDDs by streamlining planning across the whole of Cornwall – we can reduce the number of plans and processes by 50% (65 to 33).
- Tailor resources to complete and maintain LDF coverage more speedily and efficiency
- Free up resources to help deliver higher quality plans
- Simplify the process and provide a single core strategy and vision for Cornwall
- Provide greater consistency in plans and policies
- Provide certainty for business and infrastructure providers
- Respond effectively to the needs of particular areas and plan, where needed, without the issue of cross local authority boundaries
- Build stronger links with the community strategy at a countywide level (the Sustainable Community Strategy) and at a local level with "community plans" prepared for the Community Network Areas – linking parish plans etc and reducing the burden of consultation.

7.3 Regional Planning

Currently the county council seeks to “plug the gap” between regional planning policy in the Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS) and local policy being taken forward in Local Development Frameworks (LDFs). The county council prepares “advice” to the SWRA under section 4/4 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004. The district councils do not have the capacity to engage effectively at the regional level and the number of district councils across the region makes it impossible for the SWRA to have effective dialogue with the districts. Yet it is at the district level that planning for the delivery of RSS priorities must be undertaken. Considerable effort is required to ensure co-ordination and integration of land use, environmental and transport policy and implementation at a local level, and, capacity and skills to deliver are dissipated in the present arrangements.

Opportunities for improvement

Our proposals for a unified planning system will enable us to deploy skills and resources more effectively. Benefits will include clarity of approach, more consistent application of policy, and better deployment of skills to achieve sustainable development outcomes. Importantly this will enable us plan in an integrated way with economic policy and the Convergence Programme. Improvements under a single authority include:

- A simplified system with clearer functions
- The ability to engage at the regional level and have all local plan making responsibilities

- A single authority able to plan more effectively and tackle issues across Cornwall
- An authority retaining the strong identity of Cornwall and able to integrate better plans with economic development and transport planning.
- The capacity to punch our weight more strongly at a regional level and to argue for stronger strategic policy making for Cornwall, in Cornwall.

7.4 Minerals and Waste Policy

Introduction and background

Under the present system of local government the county council is the Mineral Planning Authority (MPA) and the Waste Planning Authority (WPA). There are two principal functions of the county council in undertaking these roles. These may be summarised as:

- a) Policy: the formulation of policy in accordance with European, National and Regional requirements for the management of waste and the production of minerals, response to consultation on respective policy issues and the production of monitoring reports.
- b) Development control: the processing and determination of planning applications for minerals and waste development, the monitoring of permitted sites and the enforcement against unauthorised development when necessary.

Part Two: **Achieving our aims and objectives**

At this time the Minerals and Waste Policy team are working in three particular areas;

- Cornwall Waste Development Framework: containing a suite of policies for the determination of planning applications for waste management facilities and identified 'Preferred Sites' for the development of waste management facilities.
- Cornwall Minerals Development Framework: containing a suite of policies for the determination of planning applications for mineral development.
- China Clay Area Joint Action Plan: recognising that the china clay area faces particular challenges in terms of mineral extraction and regeneration. The Mineral Planning Authority is working in partnership with Restormel Borough Council (a small part of the Plan area also lies in Carrick) to produce a Joint Action Plan for this particular area.

These are specialist "county" functions and would remain largely unchanged in any change to a unified system.

