



Using a non-statutory strategic approach to respond to the increasing development pressure in and around Cambridge caused by the phenomenal growth of high-tech businesses

social and environmental decline caused by the closure of steelworks and mines. They produced a flexible spatial strategy to guide the work at local level and have delivered over 400 projects on the ground since 1989.

In New Zealand, an urban development strategy for Christchurch brought together a large number of sub-regional stakeholders to develop a growth strategy to 2041 through intensive design workshops. And in the UK, a Hertfordshire charette developed a number of spatial options for long-term growth in the county through a seven-day workshop involving local interests groups.

Interestingly, the most successful of over 30 projects reviewed by CABI were not conceived and developed within the statutory system. This gave them the freedom to explore all possible options and at the same time cemented partnerships taking them forward – this is probably why they worked. What made these projects successful was the focus on the qualities and opportunities of their area in all its complexity and the spatial, creative and collaborative approach to thinking about its future.

With the economic slowdown offering fewer chances to rectify failures, the decisions on where and how to invest and

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CABI has long recognised the need for joint working as critical for making the right decisions about economic development and infrastructure investment. *Getting the big picture right* sets out the case for ‘large-scale urban design’, a new way of designing at the level at which economic and housing markets operate

build or achieve efficiencies through joint action are arguably now more important than ever. Our research shows that with a strong team, the active involvement of all those affected, and a flexible approach, large-scale urban design can strengthen local prosperity.

■ For more information on large-scale urban design, and how to approach it, see [www.cabi.org.uk/publications/getting-the-big-picture-right](http://www.cabi.org.uk/publications/getting-the-big-picture-right) and [www.cabi.org.uk/strud](http://www.cabi.org.uk/strud)

On 20 October, 2010, the Department of Culture decided as part of the Comprehensive Spending Review to withdraw funding from CABI. The CABI team is now working with Government and others to try to find a way to ensure the kind of expert, impartial design advice for which CABI has been known remains available to councils, communities and developers across the country.

In the meantime, CABI remains the government’s statutory advisor on architecture, urban design and public space. It is continuing to conduct design review and to deliver many programmes. Existing CABI online resources will remain accessible on [www.cabi.org.uk](http://www.cabi.org.uk)

## LARGER THAN THE LOCAL LEVEL...

Democratic decision-making that is larger than the local, but smaller than the national, forms a key element in the move towards locally-focused partnership placemaking

As the coalition government moves towards a localism agenda via the Localism Bill, which will devolve greater powers to local authorities and communities, UK planners and designers are keen to ensure that a reformed planning system meets wider than local needs, calling for ‘larger-than-local level’ planning to be enshrined in any reforms to the current system. With the impending abolition of regional spatial strategies, an alliance including the Planning Officers Society, the RTPI and TCPA have petitioned Eric Pickles Secretary of State, DCLG, calling for ‘larger-than-local level’ planning to be enshrined in any reforms to the current system. By way of reply, Pickles re-assured the alliance that the government is ‘considering what additional tools or mechanisms can be added to the legislative framework to enable “strategic planning”’.

### REINVENTING THE STRATEGIC TIER?

Many placemaking professionals are wondering how a localist approach can be relied upon to produce balanced decisions on new development that factor in community need: efficient utilities, green space, mixed use and design quality, and still act in the overall interests of society. TCPA chief planner Hugh Ellis, for example, has expressed the view that the spatial strategy system should have been reformed rather than abolished. ‘If we want to go forward we will have to reinvent the strategic tier,’ he said. ‘The only question is what shape that tier should be.’ Many have also questioned the effectiveness of voluntary agreements between local authorities and business in the form of local