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# **‘Place Making in the Planning Process’**

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# Planning Reform / RPA

- Public consultation on proposals to reform the planning system in Northern Ireland, including the measures necessary to address the transfer of planning functions under RPA, ran from 6<sup>th</sup> July to 2<sup>nd</sup> October 2009.
- Officials carefully considered the responses received and the final policy proposals were cleared by the Executive on 25<sup>th</sup> February 2010
- However, the Executive at its meeting on 14th June 2010 were not able to come to an agreement on the way forward for local government reform. As a result planning functions will no longer be transferred to the proposed eleven new councils in May 2011.
- Minister Poots has indicated that he intends to bring a revised timetable for the delivery of local government reform, including the transfer of planning functions, to the Executive in September.
- The Minister remains committed to planning reform and transfer of functions at the appropriate time and on this basis officials are continuing to push forward with the enabling legislation. Executive agreement to the draft legislation and its introduction to the Assembly is likely to be sought in Sept/Oct.



# *Purpose of the RDS*

- The RDS is the spatial plan of the NI Executive;
- It impacts on central and local Government, private and community sectors;
- It sets out strategic guidance on urban and rural areas, the natural and built environment and community development;
- It deals with the relationship with other neighbouring jurisdictions.



# *Review of the RDS*

- The RDS is presently being reviewed by DRD;
- This review takes account of significant changes in the region's society, economy and environment;
- It will inform the spending plans of the Executive;
- The intention is for a revised document to issue for public consultation in late autumn of this year.



# *Relationship between the RDS, Development Plans and PPSs*

- Currently all planning policy and development plans prepared by the DoE are required to be **‘in general conformity’** with the RDS;
- However, when planning powers transfer to councils the requirement will be that they must **‘take account of’** the RDS and any other central government plans, policies and guidance;
- The RDS will set the overarching regional strategic direction for council local development plans.



# Old style Plans – Area Plans

## Shortcomings in the Area Plan process

- initial public participation stage [Issues Papers] inadequate basis for meaningful engagement and takes too long;
- strategic vision and direction can be obscured by level of prescription and detail;
- voluminous nature of the plan and associated documents takes too long to prepare and are difficult for the public to use and understand;



# Area Plans

- policies and proposals not been adequately linked to effective evidence base;
- inadequate monitoring and lack of regular review leading to inability to adapt to changing circumstances
- length and format of the inquiry process which has been:
  - too focussed on site specific objections;
  - too adversarial in approach;
  - characterised by large numbers of speculative objections, and
  - a protracted process and a lengthy period for the PAC report;



# Area Plans

- difficulties in determining applications in advance of an Independent Examination that could be considered premature.
- lack of local identity with and accountability for plans prepared by government department
- difficulty in achieving a joined up approach to plan making between government departments, Agencies and key stakeholders.



# **New Local Development Plans**



# Objectives

**Key objectives** for new local development plan system are:

- produce plans which are **more strategic** in vision and approach;
- indicate **how places should change** and what they will be like in the future;
- **more effective participation** from the public and other key stakeholders early in plan preparation;



# Objectives

- more effective **programme management** and speedier delivery of plan documents;
- a more **flexible** approach that is responsive to change and capable of faster review;
- a stronger link between the **evidence base** and plan policies and proposals; and
- a more strategic-based independent examination process that focuses on testing the '**soundness**' of the plan.



# A Plan Led System

- The introduction of a 'plan led system' will provide a greater level of certainty for everyone involved in development



# New Local Development Plan System

## Summary:

- Streamlined development plan system
- **New two document approach**
- Overall timeframe reduced from 6.5yrs+ to approximately 3-4yrs



# New Local Development Plan System

## Key proposals are:

- Statement of community involvement
- Structured programme management approach to ensure speedier delivery
- More effective participation from public and other stakeholders early in process  
—preferred options paper



# New Local Development Plan System

- Plan Documents
  - **Plan Strategy**
    - the vision, the objectives and the growth strategy for the area and general strategic policies
  - **Local Policies Plan**
    - the detailed site specific plan policies and proposals for the relevant topic areas



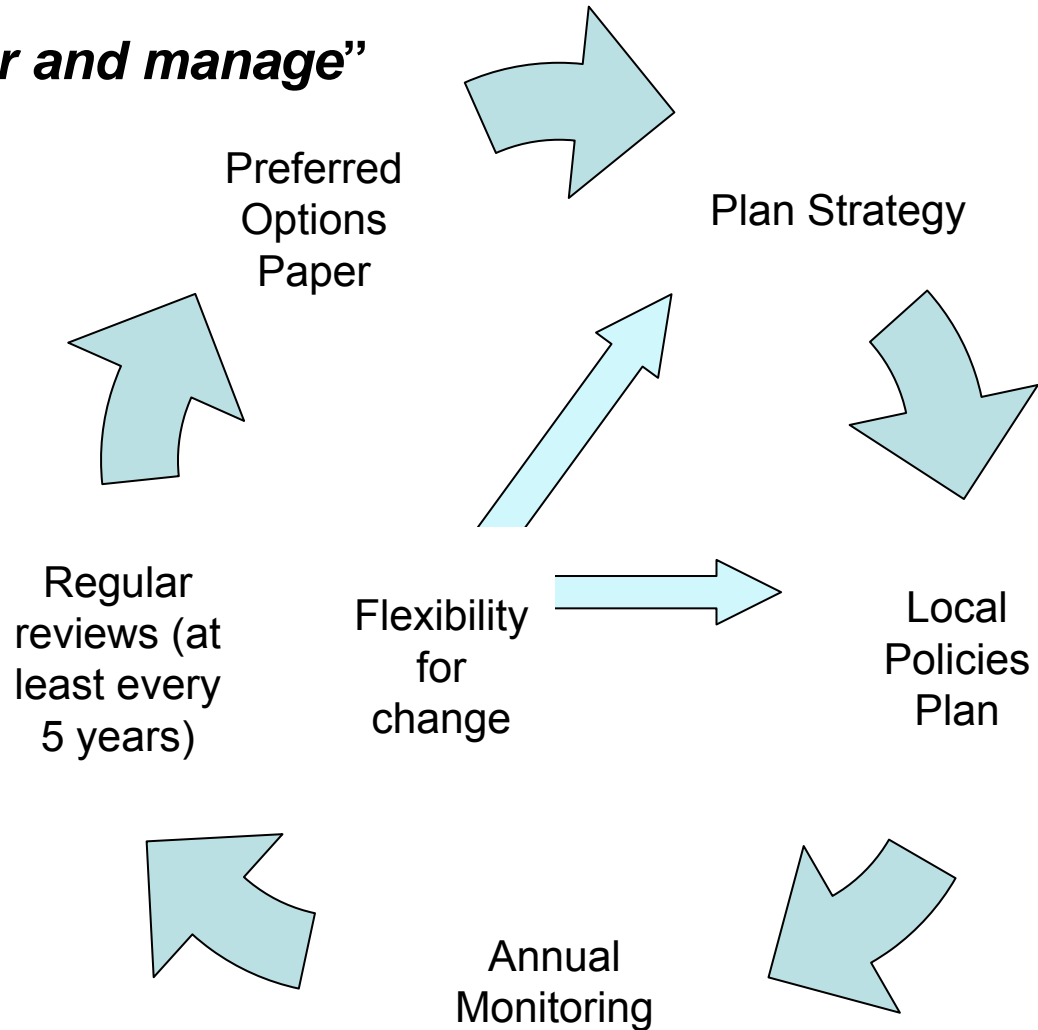
# New Local Development Plan System

- Changes to the Independent Examination:
  - Plan Strategy and Site Specifics document examined separately
  - Soundness tests
- Regular monitoring and review  
*“plan, monitor and manage”*
- Sustainability appraisal



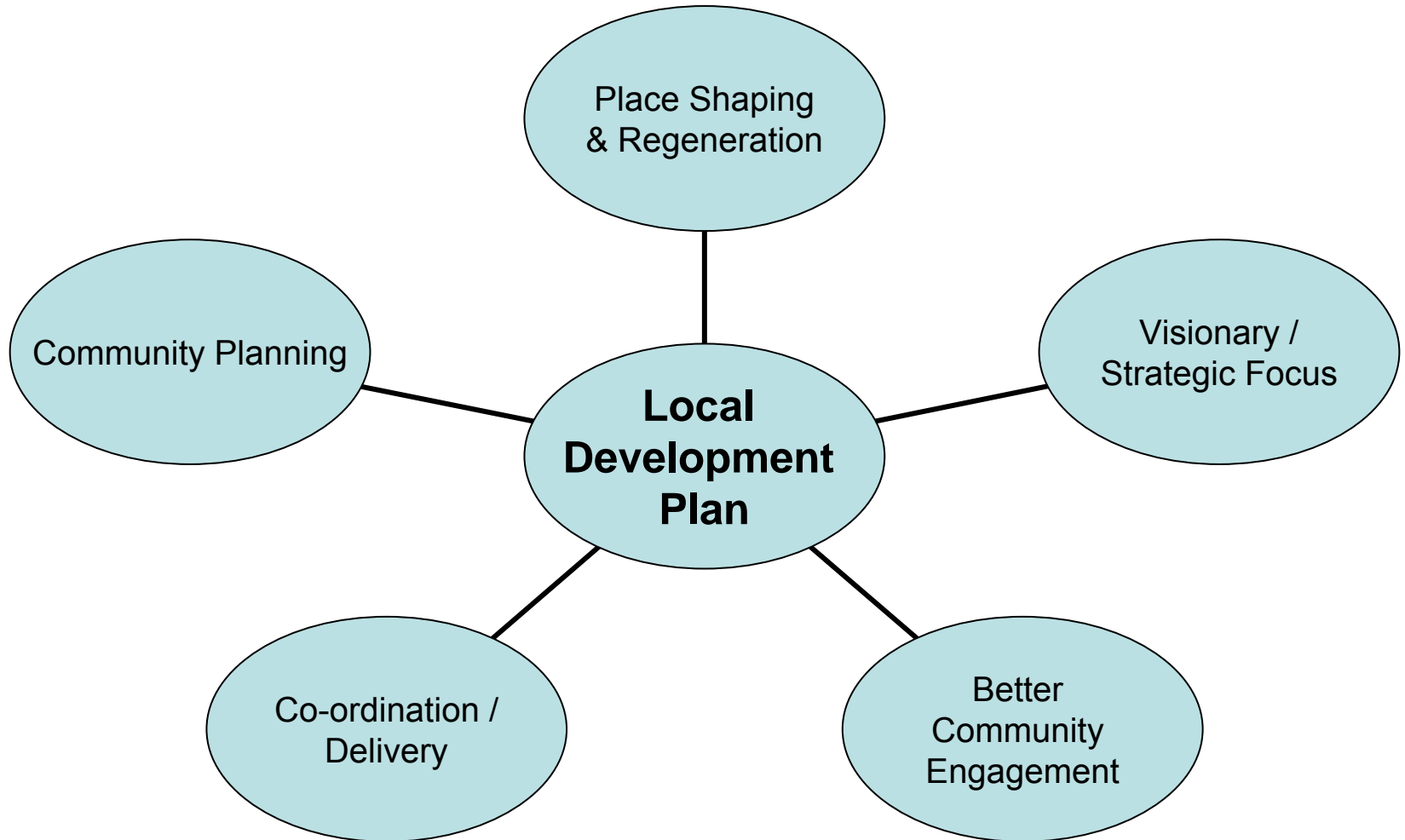
# New Local Development Plan System

***“plan, monitor and manage”***





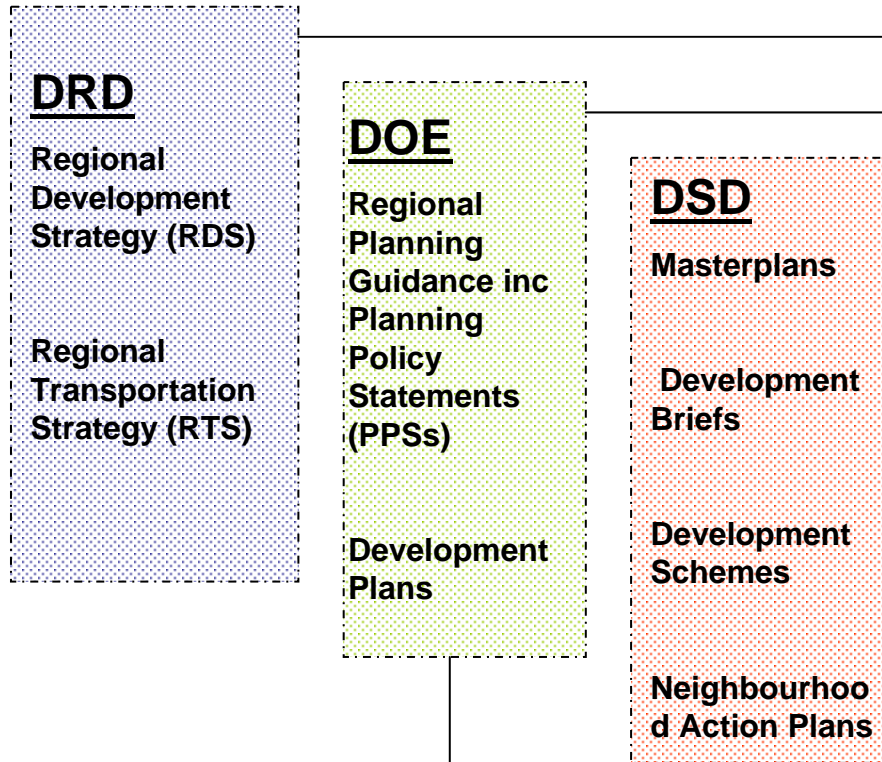
# New style of Plan



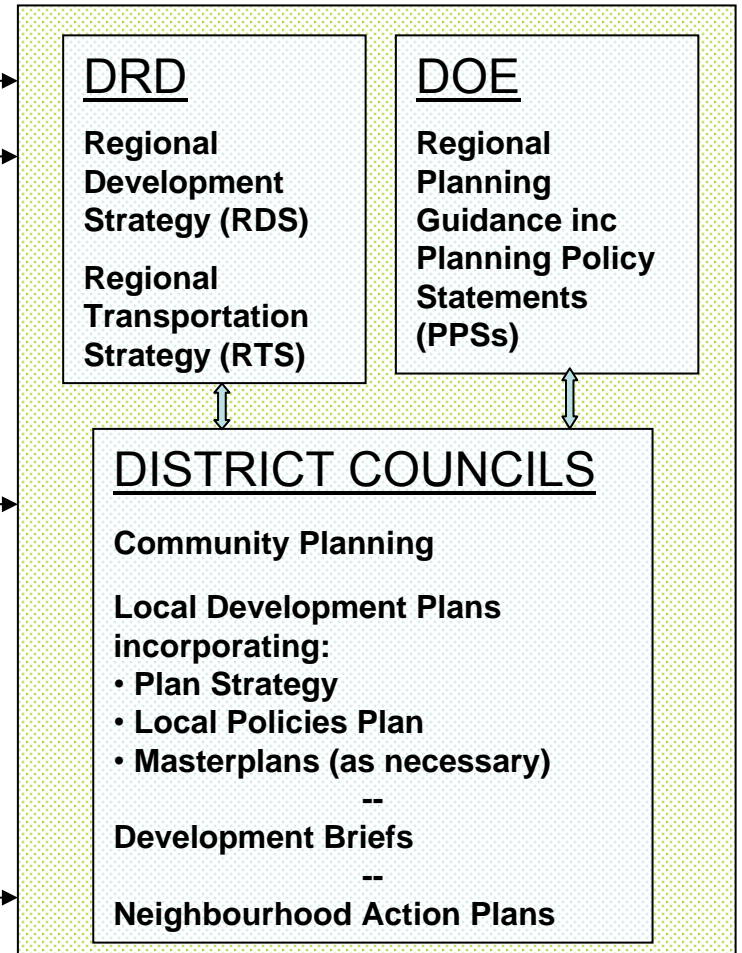


# Family of Planning Functions

## *More Fragmented PRE-RPA POSITION*



## *More Integrated POST-RPA POSITION*





# Local Plans for Local Places

## ***PLACE SHAPING***

- The new plan system will enable councils to provide a clear and realistic vision of how places should change and what they will be like in the future.
- Vision should be based on a thorough evaluation and understanding of an area's needs and characteristics
- Aim of creating places in the future that are functional, durable, viable, sustainable, good for people to use and that reflect the importance of local character and distinctiveness.
- Adopting this approach seeks to **move plans beyond a land use focus** towards 'a **spatial planning** and **place shaping**' which incorporates a spatial analysis and visioning process.



# Local Plans for Local Places

## ***PLACE SHAPING***

The new style of local development plan should enable councils:

- to **articulate a spatial vision** by developing high level objectives which address economic, social and environmental issues and by indicating where development, including regeneration should take place, and what form it should take;
- co-ordinate public capital investment** with the efficient delivery of development and new or improved infrastructure;
- enable councils to **identify the best locations** for new homes, businesses, infrastructure, and also protect places of value to people or wildlife;
- demonstrate the **principles of sustainable development** and high quality planning and design.



# Community Planning

## Link with Community Planning

### **LDPs will**

- include a spatial land use reflection of the Council's Community Plan
- provide a vision of how places should change and what they will be like in the future

### **We will need to**

- ensure that the LDPs are integrated with the emerging community planning approach
- consider early informal community engagement and visioning jointly for the community plan and LDP.



# Place Making

Place-making will be an important aspect of the new style Local Development Plan. Important elements to this approach:

- *ensuring that the most sustainable sites are used for development and that the design process, layout structure and form provide a development that is appropriate to the local context and supports a sustainable community.*
- *Making places safe and vibrant, with a unique identity and community spirit.*
- *Well designed developments encourage interaction, encourage sustainable living and have sympathy for locality.*
- *Place making is putting the community's needs at the heart of the design.*



# Place Making

A two tier approach to establish the current 'sense of place' :

1. Overall Plan Area level - typological landscape evaluation, involving elements of settlement pattern,
  - assessment of the general character[s] set in the context of adjoining areas and regions.
2. Detailed assessment of settlements, assembling factual data and analysing it to identify their special character i.e. what makes them unique and different from other settlements.
  - Understanding of the different layers built up over time which contribute to the 'sense of place' of settlements and their surrounding landscape.
  - Formulate of a 'vision' for the future building on the character and identity of the 'place' and ensuring the protection of natural and built heritage assets.
  - Involving the local community in deciding the future of their places – link to Community Planning



# *Role of Development Management*

*- improving outcomes for design and place shaping*

- Development management provides new opportunities to plan positively for the achievement of high quality and inclusive design;
- New requirements for earlier pre-application engagement with developers, the planning authority and the community;
- This "**front loaded**" approach will provide developers and the planning authority (including its consultees) with a better understanding of design opportunities and constraints within the context of community views and ultimately improve the quality of the proposed development;
- The Department is currently working in conjunction with key stakeholders in the planning system to improve the quality of residential and mixed use developments;
- Also seeking to deliver sustainable communities by applying urban design principles as demonstrated in exemplar developments such as Poundbury.