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Sir Terry Farrell's regular column.

# Localism in action

Terry Farrell believes that the planning profession should help local communities develop an understanding of what makes each local place different.

The localism agenda poses some interesting questions for planning in London. The focus of the debate so far has been on the empowerment of local people over local decision-making processes - obviously a good thing in its own right - but the fact is that London is a special case. Its status as the UK's only world city sets it apart, along with its sheer size and its unique system of metropolitan governance. It is the one city within the UK that has a high profile and an influential Mayor who is able to set policy at a strategic level (though I believe that he should be more empowered along the lines of the Mayors of Paris and New York).

Paradoxically, localism in London should mean more rather than less strategic awareness amongst those concerned with its future. I believe that this is the case whether people are acting at local or metropolitan level. The Greater London Authority, the 32 Boroughs, landowners, developers and local communities, will all need to understand how local ambitions fit within a bigger picture, even if these aim at nothing more than

maintaining the status quo.

An awareness of the bigger picture is particularly relevant in relation to London's major opportunity areas. Kings Cross, the Royal Docks, Nine Elms, the Olympic Village, Earls Court - to name but a few - are all enormously different from one another. Emphasising the unique qualities of each place is going to be the key to future success given current market conditions and the need to compete effectively for scarce investment. In other words developers will need to work harder to emphasise the qualities that make each of these places special and different. If this means a move away from formulaic approaches to property development and investment in London, the localism agenda could have an enormously beneficial impact on the city. After all, its diversity is what makes London one of the world's greatest and most liveable cities.

I believe that one of the really important things the planning profession can do is to help local communities to develop an understanding of

what makes each local place different. This means developing an understanding of how a place is evolved, how it relates to surrounding areas, and how it differs from others.

At Farrells we recently completed a piece of work on behalf of Southend Borough Council which does just that. Shaping Southend helps to set short term priorities for regeneration and investment in the context of the strategic vision we helped to articulate and develop for the Thames Estuary as a whole (most recently as part of the Mayor of London's Thames Estuary Steering Group).

A surprising aspect of this work for us is that most people think of Southend as a cockney Brighton, but we found that it has a mature business services sector, it is emerging as a major university town, it has a high concentration of creative and cultural activity, and it is becoming a centre for aviation related manufacturing and engineering.

Effectively communicating things which make places different can help local people to imagine the kind of place they would be happy to pass on to the next generation. One of Shaping Southend's key conclusions - and this is particularly relevant to local government in London - is that it is extremely difficult to set short term priorities and to make the most of limited finances without having a long term vision which takes the bigger picture into account. If localism is to be a success in London, it must help London to maintain its future success in an increasingly competitive - and rapidly changing - world, and planners in London have an important part to play in making sure that a key part of this is to reinforce its diversity. ■

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# Preparing Applications to the IPC

## Understanding the Requirements, Getting it Right

15th February 2011, Bircham Dyson Bell, London



Already one of the first two applications to the Infrastructure Planning Commission (IPC) has been rejected due to failings in the consultation process and the Draft Consent Order; this shows the importance of adhering rigorously to the new process.

Whilst the IPC is scheduled to be abolished in 2012, the new Government has made it clear that the fundamentals of the new system will remain in place, with details of a revised process for major infrastructure planning due to be published at the end of the year.

This conference provides a guide for project promoters on how to prepare an application for a Nationally Significant Infrastructure project and how to undertake pre-application consultation to comply with the requirements. It will also provide an update on the changes to the process which have been introduced through the Localism Bill.

Understand what the requirements are and how they can be met successfully and cost effectively to ensure the acceptance of the application.

For local authorities, stakeholders and other interested parties the conference provides a guide as to how the process works and the opportunities to get involved.

Your chance to hear from a leading line-up including:

**Robert Upton** Deputy Chairman **IPC**

**Robbie Owen** Partner and Head of Major Projects **Bircham Dyson Bell**

**Susan Marsh** Principal Minerals & Waste Planning Officer **Central Bedfordshire Council**

**Steve Purnell** Partner and Head of Transport **ERM**

**Jeremy Hill** Director, East of England **CPRE**

**Charles St. George** Group Board Director **PPS South West**

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