

# Culture culture or footie fan?

## Is the local planning system delivering for you?

**As the TCPA launches a good practice planning guide – developed with cross-sector support – on planning for culture and sport provision, Michael Chang, Charles Freeman and Catriona Riddell explain how the guide can help to improve the provision of cultural and sport opportunities through the planning system**

2012 was a milestone year for the English planning system. The 2011 Localism Act began to take effect; the streamlined National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) was introduced in March 2012; and the Government embarked on a review of all planning guidance. Practitioners have been bombarded with advice on the various implications and consequences of reforms.

The report from Lord Taylor's Review of Government Planning Practice Guidance,<sup>1</sup> issued in December 2012, noted that:

*'Guidance can never replace local judgement and the application of professional expertise – it can merely assist... Guidance can and should clarify the 'ground rules' for these processes, so there is clarity about approach, where evidence can be sourced, etc. – but guidance should support the application of local skills and judgement, not automate them. Guidance also has a crucial role in helping identify what information is required in different circumstances.'*

However, the pace of reform and the Government's streamlining of guidance can make it difficult to see the wood from the trees. Pressure to secure development and ensure viability should not compromise the planning system's crucial role in enhancing the quality of life for local communities.

It is therefore timely to revisit some of the topics that can easily be overlooked in the face of demand for growth and development viability. The TCPA has already developed a highly successful resource that helps planners to consider issues relating to provision for culture and sport – namely the Culture and Sport Planning Toolkit (CSPT), developed in 2009 in partnership with a range of cultural and sporting agencies.<sup>2</sup> There is also a wealth of guidance prepared by organisations within the culture and sport sectors that planners will find very useful. But given current pressures on planning officer time, it has never been more necessary to

ensure that such advice is up to date and easily accessible to practitioners.

At a TCPA roundtable in July 2012 it became clear that there was a need for a co-ordinated approach to developing and disseminating guidance on planning for culture and sport provision.

Consequently, in November 2012 the TCPA and key stakeholders agreed a to prepare, as part of the emerging TCPA series of non-statutory planning guidance documents, a publication to meet the needs of culture, sport and planning professionals.

The resulting good practice guide, *Improving Culture, Arts and Sporting Opportunities through Planning. A Good Practice Guide*, was launched in June in the Palace of Westminster by Peter Aldous MP.<sup>3</sup> Related seminars on planning positively to improving culture and sporting opportunities through the planning system, delivered jointly with the Chief Cultural and Leisure Officers Association (CLOA), are being held in Lancaster, Brighton, Birmingham and Cambridge.<sup>4</sup>

The guide is designed to be a useful reference for practitioners in local authorities, public agencies, developers, and community and stakeholder organisations (including Local Enterprise Partnerships, Local Nature Partnerships, and regional and local sporting and cultural partnerships). In addition to giving signposts to further information from the CSPT and elsewhere, the guide explains key areas of policy and the implications of government reforms, and provides a framework through which planners can consider issues relating to provision for culture and sport:

- For local authority planners and culture and leisure officers, the guide gives advice on meeting national requirements to identify and plan positively for improvements in opportunities to participate in cultural, sporting and leisure activities.
- For practitioners in the community, cultural and sporting sectors, the guide provides advice on

## inside stories

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engaging with the planning process to help improve local opportunities for participation in culture, arts and sport.

- For developers, the guide gives help in developing an understanding of specific local community needs for culture and sport provision arising from development, and advice on enhancing partnership working capacity and providing greater value in return for private sector investment. The guide recognises that developers have an important partner role in enabling development.

The guide provides strategic advice and information on how best to engage with planning processes so as to deliver development related to local cultural and sport priorities, and gives examples of current practice. It sets out a practical checklist of actions relating to relevant policies in the NPPF – for planners, and for culture and sport professionals. And it gives detailed advice and information on planning for specific activities and services, such as the provision of libraries, museums and archives, arts venues and theatres, public art, and sport and leisure facilities, and the preservation and use of the historic environment. Overall, it demonstrates how, by working creatively and collaboratively within the planning framework, a positive approach to planning can help to promote:

- **Economic prosperity:** In 2009, creative industries accounted for 5% of all jobs in the UK economy, and figures from Visit England suggest that tourism – much of it generated by cultural activity – contributes over £100 billion to the UK economy. Increasingly a visitor economy is seen as a crucial factor in ensuring the survival of healthy high streets. The Government has recently published preliminary guidance to Local Enterprise Partnerships and suggests that they should work with local business representatives, universities, the civil society sector, and others best placed to deliver local growth, promote social inclusion, and combat poverty.<sup>5</sup>
- **Health and wellbeing:** The promotion of cultural and sporting activity can play a significant role in improving health and wellbeing and in reducing both health inequalities and the number of work days lost due to mental illness.
- **Safe, vibrant and cohesive communities:** Research has shown that areas with high levels of engagement in cultural and sporting activities also tend to have high levels of community coherence and tolerance between people from different backgrounds. Research has also demonstrated that young people involved in positive cultural and

sport activities are less likely to be involved in anti-social behaviour and substance abuse.

- **Michael Chang** is Planning Policy Officer at the TCPA, and co-ordinated the development of the *Culture and Sport Planning Toolkit* and the *Improving Culture, Arts and Sporting Opportunities through Planning* guide. **Charles Freeman** is a freelance consultant supporting the Partnership for Urban South Hampshire Quality Place Delivery Panel. **Catriona Riddell** is a planning consultant and a member of the TCPA Policy Council, and chairs the TCPA/°CLOA 'Planning for Culture and Sport Opportunities' regional events. The views expressed are personal.

### Notes

- 1 Lord Taylor of Goss Moor: *External Review of Government Planning Practice Guidance*. Department for Communities and Local Government, Dec. 2012. [www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/39821/taylor\\_review.pdf](http://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/39821/taylor_review.pdf)
- 2 The Culture and Sport Planning Toolkit can be accessed at [www.cultureandsportplanningtoolkit.org.uk/](http://www.cultureandsportplanningtoolkit.org.uk/)
- 3 *Improving Culture, Arts and Sporting Opportunities through Planning. A Good Practice Guide*. TCPA, Jun. 2013. [www.tcpa.org.uk/resources.php?action=resource&id=1143](http://www.tcpa.org.uk/resources.php?action=resource&id=1143)
- 4 Details of the regional seminars are available at [www.tcpa.org.uk/events.php](http://www.tcpa.org.uk/events.php)
- 5 In April the Government published preliminary guidance for Local Enterprise Partnerships on the delivery of European Structural and Investment Funds for 2014-2020. See [www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/190879/13-747-structural-and-investment-fund-strategies-preliminary-guidance-to-leps.pdf](http://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/190879/13-747-structural-and-investment-fund-strategies-preliminary-guidance-to-leps.pdf)



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