

# Neighbourhood Plans and the Politics of Planning

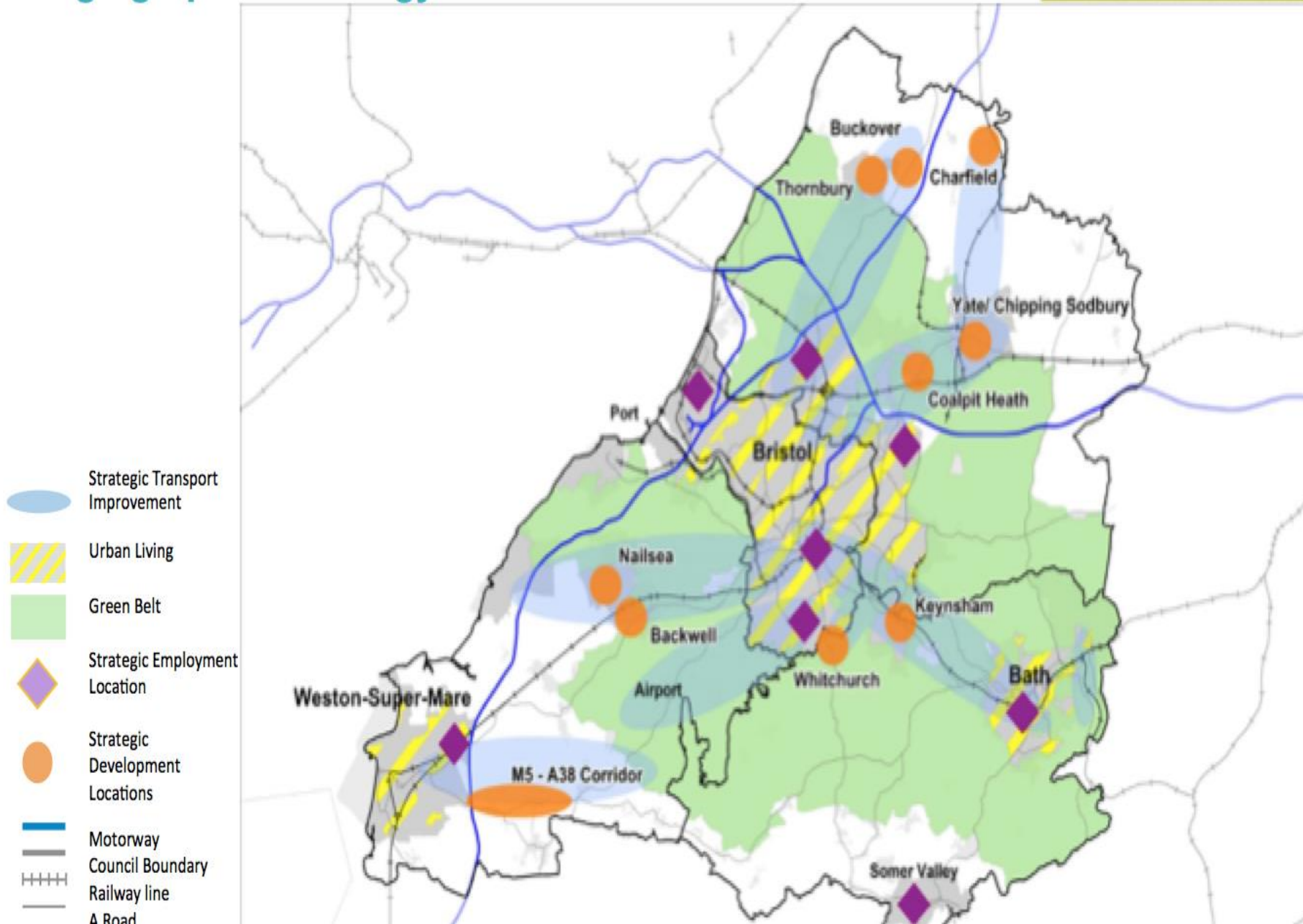
**John Baker**  
Partner



# Current trends in politics Twisted Democracy and the Rise of Populism



# Emerging Spatial Strategy



# How are Planning Decisions Made?

A diagram illustrating the balance between political and rational decision-making. A thick brown horizontal bar is positioned at the top center. A wooden beam is attached to the bottom center of this bar, extending downwards and to the left. The beam is supported by a yellow, textured ball that acts as a pivot point. The background is a light blue gradient with a subtle pattern of small white dots.

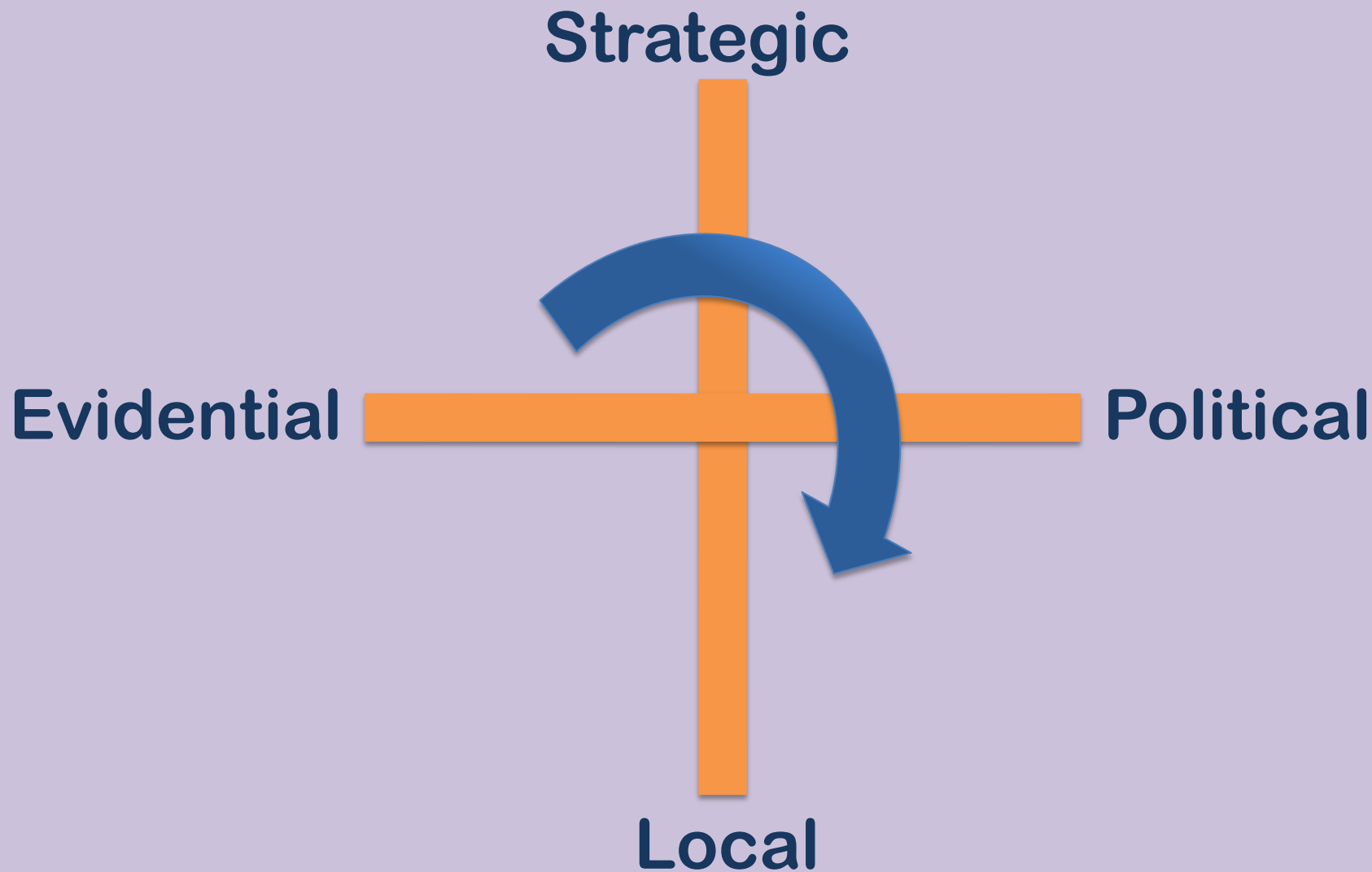
## Political

Seeking the tabloid headlines that established residents and favoured constituents want to see

## Rational

Using evidence to understand needs and test ability of alternatives to bring about appropriate outcomes

# Mapping of Planning Regimes



# Subsidiarity

“Social and political issues should be dealt with at the most immediate (or local) level that is consistent with their resolution”

# People power

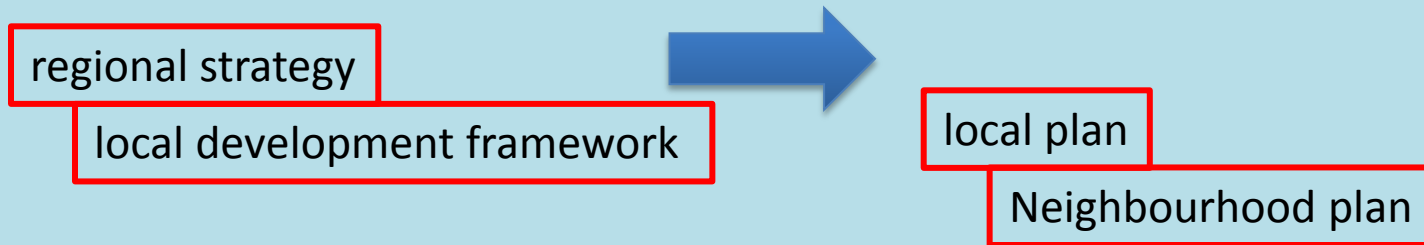
- Sounds appealing, but reality often narrow, selfish and divisive
- In planning terms, doesn't deliver on needs
- Different types of decisions to be made at different levels, and made at the right level
- Neighbourhood plans can be part of a system, but the other parts are needed too



# The Introduction of Neighbourhood Plans

- Abolition of Regional Strategies a misguided and misleading reaction to the opposition to other people having houses

Still two levels of development plan, but a step down



- Catastrophic loss of strategic planning for areas
- No obligation for the preparation of neighbourhood plans
- What is the incentive to prepare neighbourhood plans, and in what sort of places?



# The Intentions for Neighbourhood Plans

- Intended to create a positive attitude towards development in locations where it is needed
- Not intended to be used to prevent development
- “A positive, permissive regime” – Greg Clarke when Planning Minister
- To give people a role in determining the location and form of development in their area



# The status of Neighbourhood Plans

- Depends on which day of the week!
- Court decisions and ministerial statements shift position regularly
- Critically NPs are part of the development plan – hence legal starting point for determining applications

# The Relationship between Neighbourhood Plans and Local Plans

- NPs to be in general conformity with the strategic policies in a local plan
- NPs can allocate sites
- Can proceed ahead of the adoption of the local plan
- Can set policies, including level of housing provision
- NPs have to be agreed by the local planning authority
- Latest part of the development plan prevails

# Ministerial Statement on Neighbourhood Planning

Relevant policies for the supply of housing in a NP which is part of the development plan not out of date (para 49 of the Framework) if all of the following:

- NP part of the development plan for 2 years or less
- The NP allocates sites for housing
- The local planning authority can demonstrate a 3 year supply of deliverable housing sites

Seeking to protect communities from policies in NPs being overturned because of failure of lpa to adopt local plans

# The Benefits of Planning a Neighbourhood Plan

- Inclusive engagement of communities around issues for their place
- Greater understanding of role, opportunities and limitations of planning
- More appreciation of needs of others
- Local issues and concerns made known and carrying greater weight in planning decisions
- Influence over content and timing of local plans
- Access to significant funding if CIL is in place
- Process may be of greater value than the product

# Development through the Neighbourhood Plan – meeting of three parties



# Final thoughts

- Use Neighbourhood Plans for their positive role
- Be inclusive in preparing the plan
- Use the process to encourage local planning authority to get on with its local plan
- See influence of the local plan as a way to achieve objectives for the area
- Think of the LP and NP as parts of a system



# Neighbourhood Plans and the Politics of Planning

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# Using Consultants in Making Neighbourhood Plans

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Consultants can provide skills that are otherwise not there, and a surge of resources just when needed

# Consultants in the Process

- Understand the job – using a plan, what does it involve?
- Make a project plan – programme and tasks
- Understand capacity – skills and time
- Working arrangements – leadership, decision making, task groups, inclusion
- Gaps and needs - design, evidence, facilitation, drafting
- Evidence – is it really needed, what exactly is the question, is there another source?
- Critical friend role – process design, group facilitation, expert advice and review of product

# Managing Consultants

- Be clear on the role consultant is wanted for
- Identify possible helpers, discuss the job and ways of working, talk to other clients
- Determine means of payment – agreed sum for specified task or time charge
- Look at best value, not just rates and prices
- Be very clear in task definition, get agreement
- Manage consultants firmly against agreed task and fees