

What you think the strengths and weaknesses of the english planning system are



Societies have always planned, however, it was not until the Town and Country Planning Act (1947), that the planning system in England, really came in to being. This Act was the first major piece of legislation that gave the system a framework, making all development subject to planning permission (Nix et al, 1999). The system aimed to reconstruct Britain from its postwar state to become a strong, independent and self-sufficient nation.

Two factors were of particular importance. Containing urban spread and protecting the countryside. There was focus given to agriculture, which was looked upon most favorably. Recently however, this has been replaced with an environmental direction. The system has had to cope with major changes within society, the economy, and the political scene (Cullingworth and Nadin, 2001). These changes have made planning issues more diverse, which has seen the system become complex and submerged in policy (Cullingworth and Nadin, 2001).

The role the planning system plays inevitably invites opinion, both positive and negative. It is these strengths and weaknesses that shall be outlined below. StrengthsThe British Planning System ' has remained resilient' (Rydin, 2003), ' remarkably defending dominant values for over 60 years' (Bartlett, 2001). A key strength stems from its long tradition and established role of public participation (RCEP, 1999). Arguably the greatest achievement of the System has been in keeping development out of the countryside, preserving it for the enjoyment of society. Greed (2000) writes that without the system ' Britain would be covered, coast to coast, in development to accommodate the disproportionately large population in relation to the land surface'.

Instead, there are large expanses of beautiful countryside, and preserved natural and built heritage. Notable features of the system (Cullingworth and Nadin, 2001) are that it embraces and allows discretion. Public participation which has been allowed since the 1970's, is a positive feature, ensuring that public interest is considered through given them a voice. The system has positive influences for developers. They are more likely to receive NDA planning permission and the system has helped to sustain certain land values.

It affects the housing market through raising house prices and densities. This observation is taken from (Greed, 2000) who drew conclusions from a study done by Bramley. Environmental policy has become important within the system. Rydin (2003) states the system has 'fairly systematically engaged with environmental issues over the last decade' which has led to range of environmental policy documentation / legislation such as UK Local Agenda 21. Planners are so often the target of blame for either not preventing an activity, or not allowing it. Often this blame is misguided, and should be directed at other professionals who 'forged policies based on perceived problems in the terms which they were presented' (Forester 1997).

The planning system works within a very challenging environment, and is a future orientated activity (Rydin, 2003) It is by definition, (Cullingworth and Nadin (2001) 'essentially a means of reconciling conflicting interests in land use' but conflict is something that can never be completely planned away. It works to avoid anarchy and disorder and as yet has prevented economic and social collapse (Rydin, 2003). Granted it does have its weaknesses but these vary depending on the view point you come from. 'Deficiencies in the <https://assignbuster.com/what-you-think-the-strengths-and-weaknesses-of-the-english-planning-system-are/>

system have been identified' (Freshfield, 2004) and discussions on the limits, roles and purpose of planning have resulted in the system acting to overcome its downfalls (Healey, 1997).

It hopes to achieve this through reviews such as Reinventing Planning (2000), and more recently The Planning and Compulsory Act (2004). The latter of which hopes to overcome weaknesses identified in the Planning Green Paper (2001). It remains to be seen how successful this will be.

WeaknessesThe planning system is criticised for being centralized and political, with ineffective, misguide policies that place restriction on peoples freedom (Greed, 2000). It is often seen as a System which stops development. It is weak in anticipating needs, failing to allocate sufficient land use for these to be met (Cullingworth and Nadin, 2001).

It is a weakNDAadministrative system with aims it is incapable of fully implementing and policies it lacks power to enforce. There is a lack of strategic planning, policy tools, skills and knowledge. Disjointed management, lack of coordination and confusion over boundaries of the planning system are key problems. The final result is a time consuming, expensive, slow acting system, that makes mistakes that could have been avoided (Rydin,).

There is a bias in the system, particularly for developers who are able to get more out of the system for they understand how to work it. Interests of some groups are then forgotten, such as, the needs of ethnic minorities being left out of planning policy (Rydin, 2003). Environmentalist feel the system has made a lack of progress. This stems from the favorable light given to

agriculture from the outset, which ignored the environment and consequently, has resulted in numerous problems. Hindering further improvement in environmental quality are problems with implementing regulation.

Only time will tell the true failure here. That is if an ecological crisis has been averted, or if change has come too late (Rydin, 2003). Communities feel that the system no longer engages them. It lacks adequate national and regional guidance to support local interests (RCEP, 1999) and is not open and transparent. It has become complex to understand and impossible to access for straightforward advice (Freshfields, 2004). In November 2001 Tony Blair admitted that the planning system needed an overhaul.

A system which takes 8 years to make a decision concerning Terminal 5 at Heathrow was holding the country back (Number-10, 2001). Problems seen to symbolize planning's inadequacy are - allocation of housing, the transport system (linked with the growth in traffic), high rise development, urban motorways and inner-city decline (Cullingworth and Nadin, 2001). While it is the system who is blamed for these, in reality it is not just the fault of the system but in fact the responsibility of many others. Nevertheless the planning system has lost the confidence of the public. It will not gain this back until it is seen to have addressed its weaknesses and implemented visible change.

The Planning and Compulsory Act (2004) is supposedly the solution but there is much feeling that it will not make the difference that is needed.