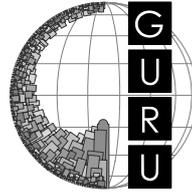


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**Greening the Red Rose County: Working towards an
integrated sub-regional strategy**

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PREFACE

This working paper examines the making of a new structure plan for the county of Lancashire. Through this study, we aim to illustrate the continuing tensions of strategic land-use planning within which national government plays a dominating role in defining and constraining agendas, while large municipal authorities challenge attempts at strategy-making at the level of both the county and the wider region. Cross-cutting these vertical relations, however, are new efforts at building up a trans-sectoral consensus on strategic spatial policy which could bind together economic development objectives with concerns for environmental sustainability at the regional level.

The data for the paper is derived from documentary and interview material gathered in 1994 for an English case study as part of the Innovations in Development Plan-Making in Europe project¹. Lancashire was selected as a case study for the Innovations project because its draft structure plan of 1993 strongly profiled the procedural innovations stemming from the Planning and Compensation Act 1991, as well as emphasising substantive issues of subregional strategy and a preoccupation with economic development and environmental issues. Further study by the Centre for Research in European Urban Environments (CREUE) on the regulatory form of the planning system in Lancashire is ongoing².

Our account is of a dynamic situation. On the one hand there is much continuity. Central government policy retains a strong control over policy agendas, both with respect to the setting of the boundaries of regulatory practice, and with respect to finance for investment in activities which would promote environmentally sustainable economic development. Many plan policies and proposals roll forward from earlier plans, or wrap long-standing proposals in a new justificatory rhetoric. But there are also new developments, both in institutional relations and in substantive content. Some of these reflect the changing 'policy mood' of the times and are encouraged by shifts in government thinking. Others are being actively pushed along by key players in Lancashire and the North West region.

There is a further problem in the British context of distinguishing what is new and what is merely a revival of ideas and practices which were developing in the 1970s, and which were then marginalised in the heady days of de-regulation and market-driven development promotion of the 1980s. One of the striking features of the British planning system, which combines a discretionary regulatory form with a policy-driven practice, is that central government politicians and officials merely have to change policy guidance to undermine earlier strategies. National government has continued to produce policy circulars and, since 1988, *Planning and Minerals Policy Guidance* Notes. These play a key role in defining limits on regulation, and in framing policy discourse around planning issues. Through these, and in many less formalised ways, central government signalled the shift towards a market-driven approach and away from strategic spatial planning in the 1980s. From the late 1980s, and with increasing vigour into the 1990s, government policy now places a new emphasis on the role of plans, and on the agenda of

¹ Healey P. 1994 'Innovations in Development Plan-making in Europe'. Paper presented to the Innovations workshop in Nijmegen, February 1994. Our thanks to Alain Motte, Abdul Khakee and Ib Jorgensen for helpful comments

² *Development Plans and the Regulatory Form of the Planning System*, ESRC-funded project 1995-97.

environmental sustainability. The interest in plans has encouraged new ways of presenting plans in a form which is more meaningful to audiences other than lawyers, developers and regulators, while the shift in policy has encouraged local authorities at both county and district level to be more assertive about the new environmental agenda. But many of the policies presented under this new agenda are in practice recycled policy ideas from the 1970s (for example the emphasis on public transport), or policies from the 1980s which are now presented with an environmental gloss. Nor as yet is it clear how the change in policy *talk*, the rhetoric of planning, is being translated into regulatory and investment *actions*.

This case is about the way Lancashire County Council became involved in building up new alliances and new policy arenas for the discussion of both economic development strategy and developing an operational meaning for environmental sustainability. The paper draws out the processes and tensions of regulatory planning at the subregional level in the central-local administrative hierarchy. Specifically we seek to show how Lancashire County Council through its statutory development plan influences the advancement of regional policies and relates to the growing number of interest groups and alliances. The paper focuses on the economic development and environmental sustainability aspects of the planning exercise, which are the central pre-occupations of the rhetoric of the structure plan. Specifically, we have examined the institutional relations and the evolution of policies and proposals in the areas of industrial land allocation, policies for improving and enhancing the environment, strategic transport policies, and policies for mineral extraction. The first two are at the heart of the economic and environmental agendas respectively. The second two illustrate the extent to which environmental concerns are modifying economic development objectives in the critical areas of tension between the two objectives.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Conceptual Issues

Strategic land-use planning lost direction during the 1980s³. Where unscathed by recent local government boundary changes, county council planners are once again regrouping and responding to the challenges which confront their regions. Several precursors suggest that outcomes, this time, may be different. The 1990s herald:

- the increased status of the development plan, and the delegation of structure plan approval to counties themselves through legislative change in 1991.
- pressures to market the region's assets transnationally in order to compete for mobile foreign investment. The critical aspects of this are claimed to be high quality infrastructure networks, the availability of high quality sites and properties, and the environmental quality of key business and residential areas.
- pressures to provide arenas for the democratic acceptability of development activity within an 'agreed' and stable, but flexible framework.
- pressures to show that regulatory frameworks are in place to ensure that the environmental impacts of development can be mitigated.

The paper therefore focuses on the role of the structure plan in expressing these changes and aspirations. The prime focus has been on the sequence of structure plans for the county of Lancashire, from the late 1970s until the 1990s, and including some of the very considerable supporting documentation (see Appendix 1). This has helped us identify changes in the rhetoric of policy justification in relation to the reality of policies and proposals. We have supplemented this with interviews with some key players involved in different areas of the plan-making exercise, and with documents and interviews relating to other strategy development work to which the structure plan exercise relates.

The method employed has been to identify the objectives and the arguments behind the strategy in the structure plan and to see how these strategies are then translated into regulatory criteria in the plan. Implicit within this method is an attempt to attribute influence on the plan outcomes to central government via planning policy guidance notes and the detailed plan representation by the Department of Environment (DoE)'s regional office, the Lancashire District Councils, the wider regional groupings of business and environmental interests, and other institutional stakeholders. We looked at how the plan reflected the diversity of interests and discourses; whether the planners had attempted to incorporate a wider section of views than legally required and the means used to coordinate and reach compromise. Through this detailed analysis of the deposit structure plan we were able to identify new 'planning' issues and concerns, or new ways of looking at traditional planning concerns and ways of carrying out plan-making, and the new methods and skills that planners are acquiring. Central to our enquiry has been the identification of change in the substantive issues, the procedures, and the key actors in strategic land use regulation.

1.2. Socio-economic context

Lancashire, as the central and northern part of the north west region, had a population of 1.4 million in 1993 out of the region's 6.5 million. Post war growth has been concentrated around Preston and Chorley, with the new town of Central Lancashire designated in the

³ see Roberts P. 'Managing the Strategic Planning and Development of Regions: Lessons from a European Perspective', *Regional Studies*, Vol 27.8, pp759-768.

late 1960s, and in the new town of Skelmersdale in the southwest. A greater dependence, than the North West as a whole, on agriculture and defence related industries has helped cushion the area from post war economic restructuring. In the mid-1980s, British Aerospace was the largest single employer in the county, and other large firms included Rolls Royce, Lucas Aerospace, Leyland Vehicles and British Nuclear Fuels. The post war growth in population and employment, however, faltered in the 1980s, with only the rural north of the county experiencing growth since then. Several of these companies are now faced with restructuring as a result of changes in the defence sector, as is the Royal Ordnance factory. Despite growth around Preston, the regional economy is considered to have many vulnerable large companies and relatively weak growth in new companies⁴. The winding up and sale of the two new town corporations' assets has exacerbated the slow market response to the re-use of redundant defence sites. There is political concern about the re-use of these sites as well as a continuing preoccupation with job creation. As the whole of the county is entitled to either objective 1 or objective 2 status, capturing national and EC subsidy is a key pre-occupation of all public sector and local economic actors.

In the North and the East, the borders of the Lake District and the Pennines provide attractive upland landscape. The coast has been a long-established area for tourism, although its traditional 'working class' tourism centred on Blackpool is now in decline. The port of Heysham has nuclear power installations and other chemical industries. Away from the main urban areas, substantial stretches of countryside, with small towns and villages, are well-protected from development by agricultural and planning policies.

1.3 Institutional Change

Until local government reorganisation in 1974, Lancashire County Council had the major regulatory responsibility for planning and development matters within its area. With the share out of functions after 1974 with the districts, the county held onto strategic planning, transport and minerals planning within its area, as well as social services and education. It has been in the control of the Labour Party for many years. Local government reorganisation in the early 1990s seemed set on abolishing the existing two-tier arrangement in Lancashire. Up until then, the county steered an independent path, with respect to the neighbouring metropolitan authorities⁵, but its own position was increasingly affected by the assertion of autonomy by the district councils and by the limitations on local authority power and finance resulting from central government policy during the 1980s. By the Autumn of 1994, this threat of abolition was receding, with the two-tier organisation now to remain in Lancashire, with unitary status for Blackburn and Blackpool. Some people we spoke to referred to the county's recent work on environmental policy and on the structure plan as a 'swansong', intended to 'leave a mark' before the councillors and officers were possibly dispersed.

To gain financial and operational flexibility in the economic development arena, the county council responded in 1982 by transferring its economic development department into a separate semi-public agency, *Lancashire Enterprises Ltd*⁶. The county's autonomous attitude changed in the early 1990s, however. It became evident to senior labour politicians in Lancashire and the metropolitan authorities in the North West that a

⁴see Taylor D. 'Winning the economic war after the troops pull out', *Planningweek* 1.9.94

⁵see Wannop U. 1995 *The regional Imperative: regional Planning in the UK, Europe and the US*, Jessica Kingsley.

⁶A further split took place in 1989, to avoid increased government regulation. *Lancashire Enterprises Plc* now specialises in investment promotion, property management, training and consultancy

firm regional orientation would be beneficial for capturing EC regional funding. An additional factor was the possibility of a victory for Labour at the general election in 1992, and the anticipation that this would lead to some form of regional decentralisation. A consequence of these shifts has been a new emphasis on building up horizontal policy networks and consensus around spatial planning issues. Our case describes the efforts to translate this into the formal policy tool of a structure plan, in the context of the formally hierarchical relations of the British planning system. From the late 1980s, this has led to the development of parallel and overlapping institutional arenas and policy discourses focused around economic issues and a regional business strategy on the one hand and a county-based environmental action programme (*Lancashire Environmental Action Programme, or LEAP*) on the other.

2. STRUCTURE PLANNING IN LANCASHIRE

2.1 The Background

All counties are required to prepare structure plans, and to review them every five years. Lancashire's history of structure plan preparation is provided in Figure 1. The working paper focuses on the processes and contents of the most recent plan exercise, in the light of its predecessors. The time scale of the plan is fifteen years, as required by government, ie 1991 to 2006. Structure plans are required by national policy guidance to contain statements of policies and brief justifications for each, supported by explanatory material. A key difference between the 1993 structure plan review and earlier versions is in the presentation of the plan. The 1993/4 plan attempts to present a coherent and well-argued *strategy*, which is traced through into different policy areas. It is also presented in a more readable form with illustrations⁷.

Figure 1: Structuring planning in Lancashire

- 1974 Reorganization of local government (county and districts)
- 1974 North East Lancashire Structure Plan start of preparation
- 1979 Central and North Lancashire Structure Plan (Report of Survey)
- 1979 North East Lancashire Structure Plan approved by central government
- 1983 Central and North Lancashire Structure Plan approved by central government
- 1986 Lancashire Structure Plan review submitted to central government
- 1989 Lancashire Structure Plan approved by central government
- 1991 Conclusion of high court challenge to the plan (relating to the boundary around one small town)
- 1993 Lancashire Structure Plan consultation draft published
- 1994 Lancashire Structure Plan deposit draft published
- 1995 Examination in Public

Plans are typically structured around sectors or topics. This organisation in part reflects how the plan-preparers see the policy issues. It also reflects the sectoral organisation typical of central and local government in Britain, with each sector having its own

⁷Plan-makers have been encouraged in these format changes by *Good Practice* advice issued by the Department of the Environment (1992)

relational networks. The format and agenda for discussion on some of these topics are firmly structured by central government policy, notably housing, retailing, and minerals planning. So there is little room for local manoeuvre or innovation. The resulting policies are the product of a complex interplay over time between the plan-writers, usually planning officers working for the local authority, key institutional networks which cluster around different sectors, and evolving government policy and legal judgements. At the rhetorical level, the Lancashire SP exercise reflects a strong attempt to integrate the key sectors (development land allocation, transport, environmental quality) around a central focus on environmentally sustainable economic development. Yet later discussion in this paper will show that key integrative links required for sustainable futures have been omitted, (for example in relation to the mineral extraction consequences of economic development and infrastructure schemes), or are based on fragile assumptions about powers and resources (for example, the shift to public transport-based development locations).

2.2 Strategic issues

The plan documentation focuses on the substantive issues. Figure 2 lists the strategic issues the plan makers identify⁸. Behind this rather long statement is a concern to combine the long-standing policy priorities with new concerns. On the one hand, the county wishes to give priority to the promotion of job-creating economic development, the restraint of peri-urban development in order to conserve landscape and agricultural land, and the redistribution of economic opportunity to benefit the older and poorer industrial areas on the east of the county. On the other, it seeks a new emphasis on positioning the regional economy in European space, and wishes to manage the amount, form and location of development to reduce damage to the environment. This shift requires a significant re-orientation of previously accepted strategies, by both public agencies and private interests involved in development and infrastructure. The plan-making task thus involves both developing new strategic ideas and persuading others of its merits.

Figure 2: Lancashire Structure Plan 1993/4: Strategic Issues

- *sustainability and growth*
how to conserve resources, reduce waste, pollution and congestion and begin to create a more sustainable pattern of development while at the same time securing further economic growth
- *the image of the county*
how to improve the image of the county so as to maximise inward investment
- *accommodating growth*
how to successfully accommodate future population growth, new houses, offices, factories and other needs
- *the west-east divide in the county*
how to correct the past imbalance in development between the west and east of the county
- *quality in the urban areas*
how to improve the image, appearance and environmental quality of Lancashire's towns and the quality of life of their residents
- *managing development pressures*

⁸These are the same in both the consultation (1993) and deposit (1994) versions of the plan

- how to manage the economic, social and technological forces that lead to dispersal of development to the benefit of both urban and rural areas*
- *managing transport*
 - how to manage the demand for transport effectively, especially in urban areas*

The institutional innovations noted above have played a key role in underpinning this re-orientation of the strategic planning agenda. New arenas have been created and new players brought into the plan-making process. In some respects, the plan making exercise merely reflects these arenas. In others, it itself has provided an arena for recasting agendas and building acceptance for new policies⁹. But the plan policies will have little effect unless they come to 'frame' the policy criteria used by the district planning authorities when regulating development or the location and investment strategies of the transport agencies (the Highway Authority and British Rail), and landowners and developers. Landowners and developers will ignore the plan if they think that either the districts or central government (through the appeal process) will overrule it. This means that the county has to negotiate a durable agreement among national, regional and local government and other key players if their strategy is to have 'leverage' over subsequent events.

2.3 A Revival of Strategic Planning

Lancashire's '*technically advanced and high profile approach has been held up as an example of best practice by many observers*', including the County Planning Officers' Society¹⁰. The environmental work of the County has been praised as pioneering¹¹. In addition to the specific work in the environmental field, it is also at the forefront of the re-newal of a strategic emphasis in structure planning in practice in England, neglected since the early 1980s as a result of government antagonism. The plan has strategies, aims, and carefully justifies policies in the light of these, bringing forward into a new context the methodological vocabulary of rational planning sidelined since the 1970s.

As an example of practice in the 1990s, the process of strategy formulation has involved the creation of new arenas for policy debate and articulation and consequently the involvement of at least some new actors in the strategy-making and plan-making process. The most evident arenas are the new regional local authority and business discussion arenas, the *North West Business Leadership forum*¹² and the *North West Regional Association*. These overlap with the County-promoted *environmental fora*. But new arenas have also developed for the discussion of minerals policies, where planners have opened up discussion with interested parties at an early stage. One factor behind these institutional arena-building activities is an effort to breakdown the hierarchical centralism of the British state and develop stronger horizontal networks across regional and

⁹We are as yet unclear as to the balance of interaction between these arenas

¹⁰Local Government Management Board *Environmental Practice in Local Government*, Luton 1992, as quoted in Masser, I. and Pritchard, A. 1994 'GIS in the State of Environment Reporting' *Town Planning Review* Vol 65(2), 205-212.

¹¹see Scudamore D. and Rudd F. 1993 'Reviews of the Green Audit and LEAP' *Town Planning Review*, Vol 64 (4). The Institutional Council for Local Environmental Initiatives has selected Lancashire as the UK representative in its Local Agenda 21 Model Communities Programme.

¹² Reformed in 1995 as North West Partnership.

subregional agencies and actors.¹³ The effort to link issues through these parallel and overlapping arenas is reflected also in the horizontal articulation of policy. Instead of emphasising the position of each plan topic in a framework of hierarchical relationships with central government and its policy guidance at the apex, the plan discourse accepts the existence of different and overlapping levels of strategic articulation, from the global, through the regional to the urban level, neighbourhoods and villages. However, the County still finds itself facing challenges to its policies, from both central government and the districts. Where the county seeks to preserve sites for regional business development, or to manage the demand for travel, central government and the districts complain that the county is interfering in the 'detail' of district responsibility¹⁴.

The most striking change with respect to the substance of the plan is in its 'policy talk'. Some concepts of the 1970s have resurfaced, such as 'equity' and 'need', and the significance of public transport. New concepts include a 'landbridge to Europe', sustainability, the management of demand, integration of sustainable development and economic growth, and assessment of capacities. The new concepts have been absorbed into a plan rhetoric which is strongly coloured by the metaphors of two discourses; that of economic 'positioning' in European space and that of environmental sustainability. There are several innovations on the methodological side too. Data bases on environmental issues have been improved. Environmental appraisals are more sophisticated. There is a clearer understanding of key relationships, which leads to new connections being made between the various topics in the plan. Policies are expressed with more sophistication and awareness of exactly how they may be used and challenged. Consultants have been used for some areas of work, rather than internal planning staff. There is no evidence, however, of a coherent re-appraisal of plan-making methods, and early structure plan reports reflect a traditional proceduralist view of plan-making processes¹⁵.

In conclusion, the research suggests that it is driving forces external to the plan-making team that are creating the flux for the revival of strategic planning in Lancashire. The team is being 'blown along' by changes happening around it, in related policy arenas, in the arena of public debate and in government policy. The plan-making exercise is as much about developing within the planning arena the implications of this dynamic and often innovative flux as it is about a strategic approach to what a spatial sub-regional plan-making process could be like.

3. THE PLAN AS PART OF A SUB-REGIONAL STRATEGY

3.1 Arenas of plan-making

Formally, plan-making is undertaken by local planning authority teams, in the context of national and regional planning policy guidance and local circumstances. Plan drafts are then issued for 'public consultation'. After amendments are made, a revised draft is 'deposited'. It is then possible for any party to make a formal objection to the plan. The impact of the plan-led system has been the catalyst for developers and other interest groups to become involved at an earlier stage in the plan-making process, leading to

¹³see Lidstrom in Khakee et al (forthcoming) on how actors are more important than agencies in building the policy networks of contemporary urban region governance. Note that many Labour politicians were preparing for a Labour victory at national government level in 1992.

¹⁴see the *Reactions Report* 1994 on the comments on the plan, and the county's response.

¹⁵see Lancashire County Council 1993 *Structure Plan Technical Report No 9: Objectives and History*

increased representations and longer inquiries. These objections are considered by a government inspector in a public inquiry. The local authority considers these, makes any modifications considered appropriate, and issues a revised version. This is then approved by the local authority. Throughout, local authority decisions are made by local politicians, advised by their planning staff. This process appears to place the local authority and the planners in a very powerful position. But central government plays a strong role, commenting in detail on drafts and making objections to plans. Underpinning these activities is the power of national government policy to override local considerations if planning decisions are challenged and appealed¹⁶. These policies are expressed in statements of *Planning Policy Guidance*. The pressure from central government is to force the system into a hierarchical form, within which local authorities are mere agents of central government policy. The key arenas of plan-making in this formal picture are therefore the local planning office, the consultation and the inquiry processes, behind which lies the informal process of bureaucratic checking through the fine detail of every policy statement by central government officials.

In practice, plan-making is typically an amalgam of different relationships clustered around issues and topics. The arenas for strategy formation and policy development may be different in each. As discussed above, development plans tend to be organised into a series of topics, each reflecting different sets of relationships. These relationships influence all levels, as the parties concerned often have national representatives and are accustomed to lobbying at the centre as well as locally. What emerges in the formal plan-making arena are debates already structured by powerful interest bargaining. The Lancashire structure plan exercise attempts to break with these traditions by its efforts to build up and work with local and regional policy alliances, and by the use of overall strategy to link the various topics. This reflects a political concern to assert more local autonomy from central government, an economic concern with new business relationships and the recognition of the need to respond to the local political leverage of environmental issues.

Of critical importance has been a renewed assertion of regional collaboration in strategy-making. The first step was taken by the business community. In 1989, a new Forum was created representing a consortium of 30 major private sector employers. A key player in building the Forum was David Taylor, formerly director of Lancashire Enterprise who joined the offshore technology and construction company AMEC, in 1989¹⁷. This *North West Business Leadership Forum* sought an alliance with the local authorities. By the early 1990s, as noted earlier, these had sunk previous differences to construct a regional alliance, for reasons of competition for European funds and in preparation for regional devolution. This led to the creation of the North West Regional Association.¹⁸ Together, the Forum and the Association sponsored the preparation by consultants, PIEDA, of a *Regional Economic Strategy* and prepared advice to central government on the content of 'regional guidance' for development plan preparation. Both organisations work to lever in investment to the north west from UK government, the European Union and private sector sources. Their united vision and framework, expressed in economic, transport, and environmental *Action Strategies* was launched in Brussels in 1994 to an audience of the EU MEPs and government officials.

¹⁶Although the County may now approve its own plan, its policies can still be challenged at appeal, when central government policies will prevail over local ones.

¹⁷he became Chief Executive of English Partnerships in 1993

¹⁸the formation of the NWRA was in part a response to the organization of the business community, (Wannop 1995 op. cit)

Equally important, within this strategy, has been the development of informal horizontal alliances within the county to address the new environmental agenda. 80 organisations were involved in the Lancashire Environmental Forum, set up in 1989, encompassing national and local stakeholders (local government, semi-public agencies, voluntary organisations), to build a discursive consensus on the parameters of a sustainable future¹⁹. Figure 3 shows the chronological history of these focused alliances which have been instrumental in developing regional strategies, to inform both the region's bids for EC funds, and to capture control of the government's current tentative moves towards more regional devolution.

Figure 3: Regional Alliances and Enterprises in which Lancashire County Council has a stake.

<i>territorial alliance</i>	<i>date set up</i>	<i>status</i>
Lancashire Enterprises plc	1982 1989	semi-public economic development agency (restructured)
N.W. Business Leadership Forum	1989	alliance of 30 major businesses
Lancashire Environmental Forum	1989	informal alliance of public/private/voluntary agencies
N.W. Regional Association	1992	local authority alliance with former public sector utility companies

3.2 Substantive Issues

Environmental Issues

The catalyst for Lancashire's strong emphasis on environmental issues was concern about bathing water quality and waste water sea outfalls, a major political issue for a county with a tourist coastline. The consistent failure of the county's 11 designated bathing waters to comply with EC standards²⁰ explains the firm stance taken by the county against the low cost solution recommended by the water company - a 5km sea outfall pipe to disperse sewage subject only to preliminary treatment. This proactive attempt to use the county's regulatory powers highlighted two problems:-

- the need for a wider political consensus on pollution standards than could be achieved through the adversarial planning permit process (refusal- appeal-delay)

¹⁹ There are now 100 organisations involved.

²⁰EC bathing Water Directive 76/160/EEC

- the recognition that environmental data currently held by the clusters of public and private organisations in Lancashire should be amalgamated and disseminated.

An environmental audit was set up by the county's Environmental Unit in 1989, collating existing data on environmental components (underlying environmental structure, air, water, waste, noise, energy, land and agriculture, wildlife, landscape and townscape, open space, and transport) and their interaction. All the data was placed in a computerised Geographic Information System and disseminated in a document entitled *Lancashire: A Green Audit*²¹. This had four aims:-

- to establish base-line data for future monitoring;
- to provide a "*comprehensive statement and analysis of the present condition of Lancashire's environment*";
- "*to identify shortfalls and inadequacies in available information, so that these can be addressed and remedied*";
- "*to act as a focus for enlisting the support and co-operation of*" the potential implementers. (p.4)

Councillors were therefore taking a lead on the environmental issue, ahead of central government thinking at the time²². The Environmental Unit within the Planning department, was answerable to an Officers' Management Group chaired by the Council's Chief Executive²³. This generated the idea for establishing a Lancashire Environmental Forum both to aid in information gathering and to spread community awareness of the issues and ownership of data and policy formulation. The environmental audit thus took on an educative role as well as an information assembly one.

The groundwork for policy formulation was furthered through the use of the following specialist working groups:

- (i) air, energy, transport, noise
- (ii) water, waste, land and agriculture
- (iii) wildlife, landscape and townscape, open space
- (iv) education and public awareness

in which the majority of the 80 organisations participated. The active stakeholders in these groups were the utility companies, representatives of transport organisations, local authorities, national and local wildlife and landscape bodies, and agricultural interests. The emphasis was on collectively identifying environmental improvements, both those which members themselves could implement as well as specific targets and actions to be addressed by higher tiers of government and other key actors. Their Action Programme, published in 1993, contained over 200 proposals, categorised by timescales for implementation (5-10-15 years) and the lead implementation body. Policies on bus

²¹1991, pp. 328

²²It was suggested to us that county councillors in Lancashire have tended to take a county-wide strategic view on issues, after experience as district councillors (interview, PM 15.2.94)

²³see Masser and Pritchard 1994 op cit

priority, car parking and road pricing, which had failed to gain full forum backing were included on the annual strategy review agenda. Some of the agencies on which programme implementation depends were not forum members.

Business and industrial development

On the environmental side, the plan-making exercise was underpinned by a rich and wide-ranging debate on environmental issues orchestrated by the county. With respect to economic issues, the county's ideas were strongly influenced by its collaboration in regional economic strategy formation, as discussed above. The *Regional Economic Strategy* reflected a complex bargaining between the interests of the various parties²⁴. Nevertheless, the Strategy reflected a wide measure of agreement across many issues, albeit at a fair level of generality. In the discussions within the NWRA, the ideas about economic strategy were then merged with those bubbling up in a number of authorities, including Lancashire, on environmental strategy. This was articulated in the vocabulary of environmentally sustainable economic development, which had by then achieved government backing²⁵. The NWRA had working groups which cross-related to the Regional Economic Strategy on both regional environmental issues and regional transportation policy²⁶. The ideas from these discussions flowed into both the policies for industrial and business development in the Lancashire Structure Plan, which was given the title *Greening the Red Rose County*, and into the local authorities' proposals to central government for adoption as Regional Guidance. This document, *Greener Growth*²⁷ follows a similar approach.

A critical issue for both economic development strategy and environmental policy was the relation with transport. The North West Regional Association had worked with the North West Business Leadership Forum to produce a *Regional Transport Strategy for North West England*²⁸. The production team for this report included staff from each of the county councils in the region, British Rail's Regional Railways, Merseytravel, and Manchester Airport. It was chaired by Micheal Callery from the NW Business Leadership Forum and the secretary was from Lancashire County Council's transport department. The national department of Transport sat with the group as an observer. The emphasis in this report, however, was on 'first-class links' for economic development purposes. In particular, the emphasis was shifted from building up the links between Liverpool and Manchester to developing the region's north-south axis, from Scotland to the south east and the channel tunnel²⁹. Although rail is mentioned, there is little emphasis on the need to manage the demand for travel, or on strategic rail links, as emerged in the Lancashire structure plan. These latter emphases seem to have come from the environmental discussions rather than the economic development discussions, and were pursued in the arenas described earlier.

Minerals

Another key arena within which the conflict between economic and environmental objectives is particularly acute is that of the location of mineral extraction. Traditionally,

²⁴A key issue was the approach to airport development. An original proposal to promote Manchester airport as a regional necessity, with Liverpool airport as having lesser status, was watered down in the final version of the strategy (letter TK 24.3.94)

²⁵see Secretaries of State 1990 *This Common Inheritance* HMSO, London

²⁶letter TK 24.3.94

²⁷North West regional Association/Regional Planning Guidance SubGroup 1993 *Greener Growth*(revised 1994)

²⁸1993

²⁹see Wannop. op cit

policies for mineral extraction have been pursued as a largely separate exercise from other plan policies with the relationship between the extraction industry and central and local government taking on a classic corporatist form³⁰. In Lancashire, construction minerals and materials for the manufacture of bricks and cement are the most important minerals activity. Lancashire provides about half the aggregates worked in the North West. Since the North West imports over half its aggregates requirements, there is continuing pressure to release further land in this sector to reduce the region's dependency on the East Midlands and North Wales. The only limestone deposit in the region is located in North Lancashire. The coincidence of this deposit with the AONB further constrains the future release of land. Its main markets in the South are reached via the M6 motorway causing severe traffic problems in places where the flows are concentrated.

As in other non-metropolitan areas, policy formation and regulatory decisions are the responsibility of the county council. The structure plans prepared since 1970s to date all have policies for winning and working of minerals. In addition, a Minerals Subject Plan for North Lancashire was prepared in the late 1970s. For the first time, a Minerals Local Plan for the whole of the County which will also include policies for waste disposals is now being prepared. The plan, called *"Getting the Balance Right"* is due for public consultation by early 1995.

The most notable change in the approach to mineral issues in Lancashire is in the consultation process. In an attempt to:

"open up the lines of communication between the key participants; disseminate information concerning the MLP process at an early stage to ensure that interested parties are informed about the process from the beginning; and obtain the options of all interested parties regarding the broad issues to be addressed in the consultation edition of the plan" (County Planning Officers Letter, July 1994)

the County Council invited various organisations including the local authorities, voluntary sector, and mineral operators to take part in a "briefing session" on the launch of the Minerals Local Plan, with subsequent "focus Groups" and an "interactive day". The outcome of this exercise will be reported in the near future. The participants (about 100) were selected from organised groups, not individual members of the public and they were by no means "new actors". However, the agenda of debates and the involvement of the key actors at the early stages of plan preparation is a step forward in the direction of more transparent discussions around building up consensus. In the context of minerals planning, this is an innovation in itself even if the nature of the debates, and the extent to which the outcome of this exercise can affect the plan's policies are not clear, as yet.

To conclude, while the making of the new Lancashire Structure Plan was still very much in the hands of the planning team which orchestrated the flow of comment and challenge through the formal consultation and inquiry processes, other informal arenas have played a critical role in developing the policy agendas and approach of the plan. The formal processes in effect provide a probing test of the robustness of the strategy, with both central government and the districts often challenging the legitimacy of policies, or the right of the county to have a policy on a particular matter³¹, and development and environmental interests challenging the philosophy, its realisation and its impact on particular valued assets. The opportunity for a stronger horizontal articulation of interests

³⁰see Marsden, T. et al 1993 *Constructing the countryside* UCL Press, London.

³¹This is clear in the public reactions to the plan as recorded in the 1994 *Reactions Report*.

at regional level has been provided in part because of economic challenges and EU opportunities. Similarly, the environmental agenda is being pushed along by public opinion and EU emphases. But neither would have been able to develop so rapidly if central government policy were not itself shifting in similar directions.

3.3 New Actors

These new arenas influencing plan-making have had an effect on the way issues are discussed, but it is not clear how far they have brought new actors into the plan-making process. Accounts of structure plan-making emphasise that the key actors, apart from the planning officers, are certain politicians, the major utility providers, government departments (notably the Department of Transport, and in the past the Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries and Food), and certain development interests, notably the house building lobby and major mineral operators. These have tended to influence the construction of plan issues before public discussion. Environmental interests have then had an impact in the more public phases of the process. There are some signs that this pattern is now changing in the Lancashire case.

In some respects, the Lancashire exercise is 'business as usual' in this respect. The minerals operators are the dominant players in the fora set up to discuss minerals issues. The transport planners sit alongside the transport operators. The influence of large public and private companies and interests is exercised behind the scenes and before public discussion starts. Yet there are significant differences.

- there is the effort to bring the key players together to develop greater coherence and to shift the debate collectively among the various parties. This has hardly ever happened before in the minerals area. Further, the development of a regional strategic alliance has been a major part of the institution-building effort underpinning the plan-making efforts of the various participants.
- some people have played a key role in promoting both the philosophy and the consensus-formation processes. These have been local politicians, senior local authority officers, and staff from key infrastructure providers and those with significant regional business and development interests.
- business interests have been more actively involved in strategy formation and in the construction of a regional strategic alliance.
- environmental interests have been brought in at early stage in the development of ideas, although Lancashire's environmental forums were largely separate from the development of the *Regional Economic Strategy*.

In conclusion, new players from the business sector have been drawn into a more active role in policy formation, usually in non-public arenas. But, apart from the involvement of environmental groups through the environmental fora, the institutional context may best be described as old players in new arenas. One consequence of a widening of the rhetoric without widening the range of key players involved in the consensus-building effort is that key environmental groups, such as the CPRE (Council for the Preservation of Rural England) and the RSPB (Royal Society for the Protection of Birds), have mounted a many-pronged attack on the credibility of the strategic focus of the plan (a 'sustainable' future and major infrastructure proposals) and on the robustness of the environmental policies in the plan (see next section).

4. SUBSTANTIVE POLICY CONTENTS

One of the most obvious changes in the Lancashire Structure Plan of 1993/4 compared to the earlier plans is in the language used to promote and justify the policies. Behind this lies a shift in the understanding of key issues, particularly with respect to the county's economic future and its environmental conditions. Further, there is a strong emphasis on a coherent strategy overarching the plan. It is not just a collection of topics, but reflects an attempt to interlink issues and policies. The way the issues are worded provides a revealing insight into the County's incorporation of an old discourse of managing the location of growth, distributing growth more equitably and improving and conserving the amenity of urban areas into a new vocabulary of economic positioning within global competition for inward investment while at the same time managing development "*without detriment to the environment and natural resources*"³². A critical distinction made is between accommodating growth, which in the British context of firm landscape conservation policies means a form of locational restraint, and managing growth, with the implication that growth must be restrained within environmental limits, and consequently demand must be managed and limited.

With respect to economic development, the new policy discourse emphasises the position of the county within Europe (Figure 4). The county's economic future is now seen to depend on how it positions itself in relation to global investment, European markets and, not-so-implicitly, EC subsidy opportunities. The structure plan can be considered as "reflecting" these debates. This leads to an emphasis on a new east-west orientation to transport, complementing the longstanding north-south orientation, and to policies for strategic development locations, aimed to attract investment, encourage mixed uses and avoid 'town cramming'³³. Environmental policies are intertwined with this economic strategy, setting limits to the impact of development proposals with the express intention of conserving nationally unique environmental resources.

A key focus for both economic development and environmental policies is the approach to transport. Here the ambiguities of the challenge of sustainability and growth are at their most acute, as objectors to the plan have been quick to notice. On the one hand, there is an emphasis on improving public transport routes across the county, for both local and strategic accessibility, encouraging the shift of freight from road to rail. On the other, policies to encourage the upgrading of strategic motorway and other trunk routes impact on more locally valued environmental resources. This ambiguity is also found in the discussion of strategic development sites. The policies emphasise that locations for development must be in existing urban areas as far as possible or close to existing transport corridors. The idea of strategic transport corridors is a key spatial organising device for the plan. Within these corridors, road and rail transport is to be improved. This implies the improvement of a west-east rail link, called the *Roses link* because it unites Lancashire with Yorkshire. The county is described as a 'landbridge' with north-south routes connecting Scotland with the south east, the channel tunnel and Europe, and west-east routes connecting Ireland, through Lancashire, with the Humber ports and Europe (Figure 5).

Finally, some areas which might be expected to be the focus of a re-framing of policy to reflect new ways of thinking about the limits to economic growth have been largely

³²the plan quotes the EC's Fifth Action Programme 1993-2000 for this phrase.

³³a term referring to the increased densities in many urban areas experienced in the 1980s with a combination of escalating land and property values and continuing landscape restraint policies

unaffected by the shift in policy discourse. For example, neither the opportunities for shifting aggregates from road to rail, nor the setting of environmental capacities or limits are mentioned. Nor are demand management conceptions tracked through consistently. People's travel behaviour is to be managed to reduce the amount of car travel. But there are no constraints on the form of development to reduce the demand for aggregates. We now examine these shifts and continuities in four policy areas of the plan.

Figure 4. Positioning Lancashire in Europe

Source: Lancashire Structure Plan: Greening the Red Rose County 1991-2006

Figure 5. Strategic Transport Corridors and Development Locations

Source: Lancashire Structure Plan: Greening the Red Rose County 1991-2006,
Deposit Version, Map 6.

industrial land allocation

As in previous plans, the structure plan allocates amounts of industrial land which each district should accommodate. This approach puts pressure on those districts which would prefer only limited allocations, but it does little actively to promote development in those areas where districts would like to see more development. The plan also indicates locations for development. The 1983 *Central and North Lancashire Plan*, as now, was balancing economic development requirements with environmental conservation. Economic development was discussed in terms of job creation, and land allocation reflected where working people lived and the areas of high unemployment. The objective was to provide for the needs of local industry while attracting footloose industry. Industry was to be located in areas with good access, re-using derelict sites where possible. To attract new industries, it was seen to be necessary to allocate suitable large sites (strategic industrial sites) with direct access to primary and other main routes (para 4.14). The new towns were expected to supply a good amount of the land. Despite policies to protect landscape and to concentrate development, the plan claimed:

the industrial land provision contained in the structure plan reflects a determination to ensure that no opportunities for attracting and generating new employment will ever be missed for lack of land. (p.33)

Further,

should an attractive, prestige industrial or commercial project come forward, generating substantial employment and demonstrating locational requirements which cannot be satisfied in comparatively restricted urban sites, alternative locations (to those in the main policy of concentration) will be considered. In all cases, the onus of proof will be on the developers.

By 1986, the economy seemed a little more buoyant, and more growth was expected. The policy remained nevertheless to concentrate development around the existing urban areas. New development would need to be well-located in relation to the primary road network. And once again, new economic activity was not to be constrained by lack of land. The land actually allocated was predominantly in the new towns and the various *enterprise zones*³⁴.

By 1993, most of the strategic industrial sites in earlier plans had been developed. Further, the supply of new town sites was diminishing. The new plan, as before, allocates amounts of land for districts. It then emphasises that most land must be allocated in the urban areas, including the strategic locations. But further sites are needed. These are provided by three strategic development locations, on which mixed development is expected. One, Kirkham/Wesham, is a carry-over from earlier plans, awaiting transport improvements. This has also generated considerable controversy as several parties would prefer more development in nearby Lytham St Anne's. The other two are large sites (over 80 hectares), which have become available as a result of hospital closures. These are both described as within the strategic transport corridors, but the connection is rather tenuous, as many people noted in the public consultation phase (Figure 5). Several interested parties are suggesting other sites. In addition, the plan allocates a site for a *Regional Business Site*. This has come from the discussions on the *Regional Business*

³⁴Enterprise Zones were designated in many places in the 1980s. They have relaxed planning regimes and are eligible for various tax rebates.

Strategy. The aim is to safeguard a large area from piecemeal development until such time as it is fully assembled for development as a high quality business location.

What these allocations suggest, then, is a roll-forward of the established industrial land allocation practices, and the allocation of some new large sites, wrapped up in the vocabulary of concentration of development in strategic transport corridors and special protection to allow the county to contribute its share of large high quality business sites. Perhaps the most significant change is in the omission of the claim that lack of sites should never be a constraint. This of course justified any large job-generating plant in the open countryside, away from public transport routes, and would have been difficult to square with the environmental strategy.

environmental enhancement policies

Throughout the plan's strategic focus, environment is treated as a backdrop for investment and place marketing. This continues the focus on environmental enhancement which has been a key environmental concern since the 1960s consultants' proposals for Chorley new town³⁵. In the intervening period the scope of the environmental components addressed has widened to include specific policies either limiting pollution or compensating for environmental damage. These range from action to reduce air pollution and coastal pollution from sewage discharge, the conservation and creation of wildlife habitats on farms, and improvements to the quality of watercourses, estuaries and coastal waters. These shifting environmental concerns reflect the socio-political dynamics at the time. None of these issues now warrant separate consideration, but are subsumed within the reasoned justification of more general, wide ranging environmental policies in the 1994 plan. The only new environmental policy area is the concern with the risks of long term flooding, and two new policies restrict development in those areas, identified by the National Rivers Authority as at risk.

The range of environmental topics addressed by the 1993/94 plan is thus essentially the same. There is, however, some conceptual development with the acknowledgement of the environment as a system subject to "*environmentally harmful inefficiencies and excesses*", and the identification of environmental assets which are "*unique*" and therefore have "*value*" to be protected and passed onto future generations. It is only these unique nationally important resources, listed as aquifers, the best agricultural land, and the quality landscapes and ecology, which are to be protected for their own sake. Even within national landscape and wildlife designated areas, absolute protection is not sought, only conservation management and the restriction of inappropriate development.

There have also been improvements in the specification of policies. For example, 'appropriate' proposals for the development and reuse of sites in the open countryside, the Green Belt, and the undeveloped coast are required now to provide an environmental impact assessment. In Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, any development allowed must make a "*positive contribution*" to the conservation of the natural beauty of the landscape. This improved policy definition reflects several factors: EU directives (pollution, nature conservation), more specific central government guidance (environmental assessment, built heritage), a strengthened information base (sources and levels of pollution, landscape types), and advice from other regulatory bodies and environmental organisations during consultation on the draft plan.

³⁵ Ministry of Housing and Local Government, *Central Lancashire: study for a city*, Consultants' proposals for designation, London, HMSO, 1967.

On two environmental issues, pollution and landscape conservation, county officers have striven to specify robust plan policies. In each case their efforts have been diluted during the plan consultation process. Policy 10 Development and Pollution³⁶, specifies locations where potentially polluting industrial and waste developments, and hazardous installations "*will not be permitted*". This is an example of a policy which has been reframed through wide ranging debates on pollution in the county, and by debates about what is a strategic policy. The reasoned justification of the policy refers to areas which have been identified by the Green Audit "*where pollution and nuisance is widespread and environmental improvements are necessary*". To conform to its strategic policy role and yet still 'control' the actions of lower level regulators (the districts), much of the policy detail has been relegated to either the justification or the implementation sections of the policy. For instance, the implementation section of the policy states:

"Planning authorities will require that the necessary environmental information be collected and made available so that a proper judgement can be made on a planning application. This will include details of the existing and predicted quality of the receiving environmental medium to which releases of pollution are proposed".

A similar attempt to strengthen plan policies on landscape conservation has been 'watered' down by the combined action of the DoE and seven of the Lancashire district authorities during the consultation stage of the 1993 plan. The six landscape policies in the draft plan covered the environmental enhancement of urban areas, the reclamation of derelict land, and the conservation of the ten different county landscape types identified in the 1987 Habitat and Landscape survey. Together these policies were considered either to be 'not strategic', in that they were detailed enough to assess planning applications on specific sites, or their implementation was considered to rely on corporate activities outside local plans and the planning system. The cumulative result of this lobbying has been the removal of detail and the slimming down of the six policies to two policies, one covering landscape enhancement and the other reclamation. Policy 13 Enhancement of Urban and Rural Landscapes³⁷, still though retains its emphasis on the distinctiveness of the 10 landscape character tracts which "*will be conserved, renewed and enhanced with particular regard being given to the special landscape and habitat features within them*".

Equivalent effort does not appear to have been expended on setting goals for wildlife conservation. Progress has been made in bringing forward sites of acknowledged wildlife importance for national protection³⁸ since the 1970s, but the 1994 plan has not strengthened the protection to be afforded to the nationally designated Sites of Special Scientific Interest or National Nature Reserves. Policy 9 Development and Nature Conservation³⁹ complies with weak government guidance by stating that "*development will not normally be permitted where it is likely to have a detrimental effect on*" these locations. In many respects this reflects the government's own uncertainty in responding to EU directives calling for a strengthening of wildlife protection.

What these examples suggest is that the 1993/94 plan has reframed existing policies on the restraint of development in rural areas, and the protection of landscape and wildlife to

³⁶ Lancashire County Council, *Lancashire Structure Plan 1991-2006, Greening The Red Rose County*, Explanatory memorandum Deposit Edition, 1994, page 51

³⁷ 1994 Deposit Plan, page 56

³⁸ aided by Lancashire Wildlife Trust, formerly Lancashire County Naturalist Trust.

³⁹ 1994 Deposit Plan, page 49

guide the districts with the formulation of site specific detailed policies. Any attempts to specify the form of the detailed policies required in local plans have been resisted by the DoE and the districts affected. Although the new environmental discourse appears in the plan ('finite, unique resources'; 'environmental systems'; 'ecological diversity') it in no way influences the weight to be attached to environmental concerns. More coherent, comprehensive landscape and pollution policies, drawing on the environmental consensus of the Lancashire Environmental forum, are reflected in the plan, but their effectiveness may well be crowded out by the overriding strategic focus on economic development opportunities and the acceptance of a minimal interpretation of sustainable development. The interpretation of this balance will be decided by the districts in local plan preparation.

transport

The 1993/4 Structure Plan is striking in its emphasis on strategic transport corridors, which both link the county into a European economic region while drawing the poorer Eastern areas of the county into the orbit of the richer areas. The north-south corridor derives from the *Regional Transport Strategy*. The west-east corridor appears to be Lancashire's own idea. It also gives a high profile to public transport, and particularly rail transport. It aims to contribute to reducing the number and length of car journeys through locational measures to manage the demand for travel, and to traffic management in urban areas to reduce both the amount and speed of traffic. These emphases contrast with earlier plans, which were preoccupied with road schemes and establishing road hierarchies. But the concern with public transport has been long-standing. The 1983 *Central and North Lancashire Structure Plan* sought to retain rail services and encourage rail freight. Traffic management measures, including bus priority lanes, pedestrianisation and car parking measures were emphasised. There was also a concern to concentrate development to save resources, in this case reduce the pressure on the county's bus service provision budget⁴⁰. In terms of rail services, a key consideration was to maintain commuting links from the south of the county to the Manchester and Merseyside conurbations.

By 1986, there was a realisation that road building budgets were under pressure. The 1986 *Lancashire Structure Plan* includes policies to locate developments which generate high trip volumes near public transport routes. Public transport was emphasised, despite declining use and the difficulties of supporting non-commercial routes after bus deregulation in 1986, given the large numbers of households in some areas without access to a car. Road schemes were to be prioritised where 'best results' could be achieved in terms of economic benefit, impetus to economic development, reducing accidents, and reducing environmental damage due to congestion (policy 47, p.11).

What is new in the 1993/4 Structure Plan is therefore the promotion of new rail routes, the west-east *Roses link*, a much clearer attempt to concentrate development within the strategic transport corridors and the urban traffic management measures. Major development potentially generating significant traffic volumes will not be permitted outside the strategic transport corridors. Transport provision here will be improved both for road and rail. These policies received widespread support from many quarters in the consultation on the draft plan, although questions were asked about how the county could achieve its policies without resources to invest in the rail network. Several environmental lobby groups attacked the investment in roads as well as rail, and argued that the strategic development sites were not close enough to the main strategic corridors.

⁴⁰"in view of the expected difficulties in maintaining an adequate network of bus services over the plan period, it is desirable that new development be located where it can be served in an efficient manner" (para 5.7, p.57).

Central government has also had problems with the policies, although its own commitment to a greater emphasis on rail has grown over the past two years. The Department of the Environment has criticised the policies on the development of the strategic rail transport as inappropriate, as they are not 'land use based policies'⁴¹. The Department of Transport has emphasised the road traffic generating capacity of developments even within the transport corridors. Once again, the crucial issue here is where the investment resources are to come from. In effect, transport investment may have to be paid for by new development⁴².

minerals

The draft Regional Planning Guidance for North West states that:

"national policies dictate many of the controls over the extraction of minerals. There is, therefore, relatively little scope for initiating significant changes in the pattern of supply in the short to medium term" (Greener Growth, 1994 p.18)

However, an examination of the treatment of minerals issues in Lancashire plans from the mid-1960s to 1990s indicates a gradual shift in mineral policies from an emphasis on the economic value of minerals towards concern over their environmental implications. Yet this is mainly manifested in the 'policy talk' of the plans rather than the actual policies. This change of emphasis can be illustrated firstly by the vocabulary used in the discussions; secondly, by the rewording of policies, starting off from the environmental problems associated with mineral extractions; and finally, by the change of topics in the sequence of plans.

The minerals section of the Lancashire Plan 1993/4 has picked up most of the vocabulary of sustainable development which these days is readily available to mineral planners through government policy guidance. But it has not made much progress in limiting the demand for mineral extraction. The most obvious example is the absence of any links between the proposals for the extension of the county's road networks and their implications for aggregates demand, nor even any encouragement for the use of secondary materials in the county's construction schemes. There are, however, some tentative steps away from rhetoric towards substance. For example, Policy 41 states that priority for development will be given, among other things, to *"the recycling of redundant sites and buildings for new uses"*. The rationale for this policy is *"to reduce the demand for greenfield sites"*. Although the impact of the policy on reducing the demand for primary land-won aggregates has not been mentioned in the rationale, the policy can still contribute towards conservation of finite resources.

There are clear changes in the rhetoric and argumentation of the 1993/4 Lancashire Structure Plan. There are also new policies and proposals. The new arguments could lead to new criteria in the determining of investment priorities and in the regulatory negotiation over development proposals. Most of these new ideas seem to have come from the discussion arenas which have fed into the plan, changing the nuances and emphases of policies and arguments articulated in earlier plans. But it remains unclear how this new 'policy talk' will follow through into implementation. Perhaps the most significant evidence of the durability of the shift is the degree of support for the changes received in the public reactions, and the continuing shift in national government policy. It is as if the statutory arenas and process of structure plan preparation are being filled

⁴¹Reactions report, pp. 168/69

⁴²There is a suggestion in the comments that the road and rail providers are competing for developers' contributions from major development schemes.

with a new wave of ideas billowing across political, professional and pressure group discussion arenas, in Lancashire as elsewhere in the country. Because of its institutional proactiveness, Lancashire finds itself at the forefront of working this rhetoric through into its practical implications.

5. METHODS

The Lancashire Structure Plan 1993/94 is primarily a policy-driven plan, in the mould established in Britain in the 1980s. There is little evidence of explicit attention to methodological innovation in this plan-making exercise, in sharp contrast to the plan-making exercises of the 1970s⁴³. Advances in method have been made though in three areas. Firstly, the new processes of consultation and discussion already referred to in section 3. What seems to be happening, in an ad hoc way, is the slow invention and innovation of the kind of "group processes" for consensus-building already identified in US-strategic planning processes⁴⁴. These involve much freer forms of debate than those traditionally associated with public participation in planning, where pre-set agendas were discussed with "the public". The Environmental forum, the discussions on the Minerals Local Plan and the collaborative work on the Regional Economy Strategy all shared elements of such processes at work. There are signs of such open-ended informal group discussions around strategic planning elsewhere in England.

Secondly, there has been technical innovations with respect to the environmental policies, in the information base for the plan and the form of appraisal. Lancashire is one of the few local authorities in Britain which has been refining techniques of environmental appraisal for internal auditing purposes, for a state of the environment report (Green Audit) and for a strategic environmental assessment (SEA) of the plan's impacts. The Green Audit is being used as an educational tool through a CD Rom version of the GIS database in the main libraries and secondary schools. The driving force behind this innovation and its policy utilisation has come from organisational restructuring within the planning department with the creation of an Environmental Unit of 5 specialists, a new Computer Development Group, and external links to the Lancashire Environmental Forum. At the core, directing this operation is the Officers Management Group with close links to the leader of the Council who chairs both the Policy and Resources Committee and the Lancashire Environmental Forum. As a technique, GIS allows ease of manipulation and retrieval of site-specific information. This has assisted in developing the renewable energy policies in the plan, the preparatory work for the Minerals Local Plan, as well as modelling the environmental impact of wind farm proposals received.

A Strategic Environmental Assessment of the 1986 Structure plan was carried out at the beginning of the review process so as to feed into the discussion of strategic issues in the new plan. This was essentially a policy impact analysis of the 165 policies on the 11 environmental components or stocks covered in the "scoping" exercise in the Green Audit database for comparative purposes. Fairly rudimentary numerical scores for impact were assessed by a single environmental scientist. This gave negative aggregated scores for 46 policies, mainly covering minerals, transport, waste disposal. Rural

⁴³see McLoughlin et al 1975 *Aspects of Structure Planning*, CES London

⁴⁴ see Innes, J. 1992 'Group processes and the social construction of growth management: Florida, Vermont, and New Jersey'. *Journal of the American Planning Association* 58: 440-454.

landscape policies had the least environmental impact. The SEA of the deposit-version of the 1994 structure plan utilised the same methodology with a team assessment of the direction of the likely impact (positive/negative/no impact). 18 policies in the 1994 plan are considered to have adverse effects, most notably the national and regional transport policies. Negative impacts were also identified on minerals, air and energy resources, principally for retailing, road building, housing, and mineral extraction policies.

Finally, the approach to the style and the presentation of the plan is also a significant methodological innovation, emphasising the *persuasive* role of the plan as well as its role as a record of agreed policies to be fought over with developers in appeals and the courts. The strategic approach and the argumentation are critical to this persuasive role, as is the language, argumentation and illustration of the plan. Yet it is not quite clear who the audience for the plan is seen to be; implicitly it is probably the primary audience of plan-readers - central government and the districts; landowners, developers and consultants; pressure groups; and possibly EU funders.

6. CONSEQUENCES

At this stage, it is very difficult to say what will be the consequence of the innovations described here. If it endures, the alliance-building work could provide a resource through which to maintain and develop a horizontal, regional debate on strategic policy. There are slow developments in the British state encouraging such decentralisation⁴⁵. But in practical terms, the interest alliance has to be able to affect the investment decisions of key actors, notably with respect to transport and utilities, and the regulatory decisions of district councils and central government. While in the metropolitan areas of the North West, ie Greater Manchester and Merseyside, unitary authorities are involved in the strategic alliance, in Lancashire, the regulatory leverage of the strategy depends on the interpretation of district councils. These may wish to articulate strategies in their own way, and construct their own strategic alliances and discourses.

However, the environmental rhetoric has retained its momentum at the national and regional level, and most district authorities are working on their Agenda 21 strategies. In this context, the discussion arenas described here seem to have had an enduring effect in shaping the thinking of several agencies, local authorities (councillors and officers), and pressure groups. This will probably change the demands these parties make in district development plan-preparation arenas and in demands for investment. The production of the *State of the Environment Report* and *Action Programme* by Lancashire Environmental Forum has thus achieved both an educative and a consensus-building role. The process of data collection served to enlighten forum members and publicity surrounding both the Green Audit and LEAP raised environmental awareness among the general public. Similarly, the process of data collection was important for alliance building among forum members. This was the mechanism for getting hold of the necessary information and for ensuring group ownership of both the data and the policy response. Knowledge was thus agreed and 'produced' by LEAP. Yet the business sector is still largely outside these environmental discussions⁴⁶. It remains unclear how far business interests are prepared to accept environmental constraints, and what the

⁴⁵ The strengthening and coordinatiopn of central government activities in the new regional *Government Offices* is already a step in this direction, though shaprening the tension between central government and local authority groups as controllers of regional agendas and networks.

⁴⁶see interview PM 15.2.94

consequences of this would be for economic development initiatives. A further limitation on the plan's commitment to the philosophy of environmental sustainability is that the long-standing policies on road construction and elements of an unsustainable settlement policy still pervade the 1994 version of the structure plan, even though the objective arising from the work on Strategic Environmental Appraisal was to reduce the number of policies with adverse environmental impacts from 30% (in the 1986 structure plan) to 15% (in the 1994 deposit version of the structure plan). The dominant Labour group in the County Council still associate road building with increased job opportunities and economic growth. Meanwhile, landowners and developers are gearing up to contest the strategy where it limits their development expectations. It thus remains to be seen how the new ideas are dispersed and lead to real leverage on policy agendas. As the former Lancashire County Planning Officer commented, the main change so far is a slight tip of the balance from economic towards environmental considerations. The impact of this is small at present, but if the shift continues, over time, the consequences could be a significant re-moulding of planning and investment policy and practice⁴⁷

As to the potential for changes to statutory requirements, since local authorities do not have the power to make legislation, the only way that legislation could be changed is by gaining the support of government ministers or the national Parliament. Given the political colour of the majorities in North West local authorities, such support is not likely to be forthcoming at present. However, the commitment of many of those working within these strategic alliances is towards a situation where there are stronger powers at the regional level. Already, local interests are looking towards the prospect of a Labour majority at the next election.

7. CONCLUSIONS

This working paper has sought to demonstrate and account for the revival of strategic thinking within Lancashire. This reassertion of strategic direction has involved:

- picking up some good practices lost in the 1980s
- developing a new understanding of policy interlinkages
- refining and making policies more robust for use in framing regulatory decisions
- building in a negotiated consensus around strategic directions

Underpinning the complex interplay of local forces for change at the sub-regional level are broader contextual changes in the political and economic spheres at both national and EU level. Our research revealed the following structuring forces:

- increased European-scale competition for EU funding and for inward investment; this seems to demand a more coherent strategic approach at regional level.
- increased competition for national resources, and the need to have a strong alliance and storyline for lobbying for funds⁴⁸.
- an increased political and business appreciation of the value of the regional and transsectoral articulation of economic development policy.

⁴⁷see telephone discussion with DT, x. 10.94

⁴⁸Note the impact of competition for the *Single Regeneration Budget*, and the new *regional Challenge*

- increased political leverage of the national mood of environmental consciousness.
- shifts in national policy on environmental issues and on transport priorities; which give support to directions already of interest to the county. As a result, central government has developed parallel policies and only constrained Lancashire's policy development to a limited extent.
- emphasis at national level on a plan-led approach to development regulation, giving slightly more power to development plans⁴⁹

We can discern, in the vertical cohering of these bottom up and top down forces, a slow weakening of the hold of central government over regional and local spatial policy.

These vertical flows are interconnecting with the parallel and overlapping horizontal articulation of interests identified in section 3. This is dominated by an alliance of business interests seeking to market the investment opportunities of the sub-region and attract subsidy, and a dominant elected member support for job growth. 'Clinging' onto this dynamic force is a growing environmental consciousness which is primarily officer driven but directed by a few key politicians. This has revealed itself in the consensus around the Lancashire Environmental Forum's action programme (LEAP), and is likely to grow into a stronger force as and when the political potential of the Local Agenda 21 is realised. Both interest strands have found it beneficial in justifying their strategic visions to make links across the historically sectoralised British policy approach. The 'place-marketers', for example, have linked economic development issues with transport corridors and environmental enhancement. Where there is commonality between these concerns and sustainable development interests, the growing environmental consciousness has been allowed a visible expression in the 1994 plan. This is most clearly reflected in the environmental enhancement policies of the draft consultation plan. The full expression of these interests in the deposit version, however, was blocked by the combined efforts of the regional DoE and six of the Lancashire districts.

The rhetoric of the plan, in its strategy articulation, currently reflects this political balance. There are in effect, two plans in one document. The first part of the plan presents a clear strategy linked by seven strands, with aims, objectives and issues. It presents a strong growth signal to development and investment 'levers' who are perceived to be nationally and internationally located. This is an innovation in itself for a British structure plan. The rhetoric of the remainder of the plan - the policies - is constrained by external interests and the realities of the hierarchical British planning system. This 'second' plan is a strategic land use tool to regulate development. It responds firstly to what is considered to be appropriate by the central government for such a broad-brush document, setting markers for lower level regulators. Secondly, it reflects the specific sectoral policy guidelines issued by the DoE.

In terms of driving forces, economic concerns remain dominant. In this respect previously accepted strategies in earlier structure plans carry over into the 1994 version. But a policy reorientation is in the making, which surfaces in some places in the 1994 plan, but which has still to play out its full course. Any internal policy shift is not yet transparent in the 1994 plan, being overshadowed by the more dominant economic discourse which has been more readily accepted by the political party in control. The dynamic force for a new direction is gaining support within the horizontal alliance building of the Lancashire Environmental Forum and the awareness-raising of the Green

⁴⁹How much more is of course a matter of considerable debate, see Healey 1994 op. cit.

Audit and LEAP, and with the impact of local authority work on Local Agenda 21 still to be played.

There has been some improvement in technical methods most noticeably in the plan-making strategy. This has come about because ideas about the plan-making process have changed. The shift to a plan-led system has brought concepts of efficiency and effectiveness to the foreground. The survey-analysis-plan methodology of the 1976 SP has been replaced by one of monitoring-review-plan. More attention has been given to both the plan as a regulatory tool and how it will be used by the lower tier authorities. Plan policies are beginning to specify the parameters to be taken into account when assessing a development application as well as the level of detail required from the application. This is particularly noticeable in some of the environmental policies leading to more robust and crafted policies. Underpinning these changes has been the use of a sophisticated computerised GIS package to manipulate as well as disseminate data. This has been valuable not merely in the plan-making process. It has also been used to service the Lancashire Environmental Forum and to open out discussion on environmental issues with members of the public. This has required the specification of information needs and methods of collection and reviewing information to a much greater detail than before.

But perhaps the most striking innovations are not in the plan itself but in the process underway in the institutional context for plan-making. Here deliberate efforts are being made at horizontal integration among major regional interest groups. These incorporate business, public sector and, to an extent, environmental groups. Although we are still unclear about the breadth and depth of these new alliances, these efforts illustrate active attempts to build up a regional institutional capacity for co-ordination and strategic direction, to challenge both the traditional centralism of the English state and the sectoralism of the organization of British public policy.

This regional capacity-building work emphasises not merely a mark of forging new links, and interlinking previously separate networks, - links between public and private sectors, and between different policy networks. It also involves developing new discourses with which to focus strategy development. Such conceptual development provides a further mechanism to reinforce horizontal integration, through spreading understanding and 'ownership' of new directions.

Together, the network-building and conceptual development work serve to generate both "social and intellectual capital" to underpin the development of horizontal alliances. But what we have described is the early stage of a slow and difficult process towards a sub-regional strategy within the context of the political and institutional traditions of the state in England. The efforts could easily be de-railed if central government changes its current environmental policies; or the slight shifts towards government decentralization are stalled, and if the regional economic priorities "crowd-out" all other considerations. In this case, the Lancashire structure plan will remain as an example of a failed rhetoric. But yet the power of the rhetoric, in Lancashire and elsewhere in England serves to frame the climate of policy ideas generally. Through its pervasive and diffuse influence, the rhetoric may yet have real policy effects.

Appendix 1: Source material

Reports

Lancashire Structure Plan Explanatory Memorandum 1986
 Lancashire Structure Plans 1986/1989/1990
 Lancashire Structure Plan: Greening the Red Rose County
 Lancashire Structure Plan 1991-2006: Consultation Draft Oct 1993
 Lancashire Structure Plan 1991-2006: Deposit version Sept 1994
 Lancashire Structure Plan 1991-2006: Report No. 9: Objectives and History (Oct 1993)
 NWRA/NWBLT Regional Transport Strategy for North West England (1992)
 Lancashire County Council Transport Policies and Programmes 1990-91 (July 1989)
 NWRA/NWBLT Regional Economic Strategy for North West England (Peida 1993)
 Central and North Lancashire Structure Plan 1983 Written Statement and Explanatory
 Memorandum and Report of Survey
 material on Lancaster Local Plan and Morecambe and Heysham
 NWRA, Greener Growth, Regional Planning Guidance Sub-Group, September 1993,
 Draft submission to SoS.
 Lancashire Minerals and Waste Location Plan: Preliminary Consultation Exercise 1994
 North West Regional Aggregate Working Party Report 1992

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