

# Integrated transport planning in the UK: From concept to reality

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## Abstract

This paper explores the need for new planning authority practices and structures that can accommodate new policy demands, synergies and approaches to urban management in the UK. Initially it considers recent UK government ideas on the integration of transport and land use planning, exploring how the concept has been located carefully in relation to both established and emerging debates about, for example, sustainability, mobility and structures of governance. The paper then moves on to consider the relationship between these concepts in EU transport discourse taking an example from Sweden of what an integrated urban transport policy might look like on the ground. The final section develops a model of integration and applies this analytic construct to assess integration practices and outcomes of urban mobility management at the local authority level in England. The research uncovers implementation failures including duplication of procedures, failures in communication and the lack of clear and resourced responsibilities.

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## 1. Introduction

Sustainable urban management requires new policy linkages and joint working horizontally across local authority departments and service providers and co-operation along the governance lines from national to the local level. Integration, co-ordination and interoperability are core themes in the development of both the UK 10-Year Transport Plan (DETR, 2000) and the EU Common Transport Policy (EC, 2001). Integration can be discussed in a number of ways. The conceptual differences between co-operation, co-ordination and integration are discussed in academic papers (for example, Stead, 2003) and the functional organisational issues of improving public sector policy co-ordination are highlighted in two influential Cabinet Office reports (2000a,b).

Beyond the academic debates and the policy rhetoric there are questions about how strategic policies on integrated planning or spatial planning are actually being selectively adopted and adapted in the complex reality of local authority practice. The aim of this paper is therefore to develop a model or analytic typology that allows the inter-connections between policy issues and administrative responsibilities to become transparent. This will be presented as a staged approach to achieving integration which will allow UK policy makers (and others) to be clear about the likely impact of policy measures they propose on the transport system. The research for this paper was carried out in 2002–2003 using qualitative methods of inquiry including interviews, documentary and case study analysis from a critical realist and institutional perspective (Vigar et al., 2000).

There is a general understanding that implementation deficits result from the lack of integration, divergent agendas and lack of ‘fit’ between different disciplinary and administrative policy areas, such as land use

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planning, transportation planning, and sustainability. Administratively integration can be considered along two axes. Firstly, the horizontal sectoral integration of public policies and their delivery by a number of public and private organisations. Secondly, the vertical inter-governmental integration of policies between the tiers of government. The sustainability agenda is one of the key drivers to achieving policy integration with the need to embrace holistically social, economic and environmental issues. In this way, sustainability transcends the competencies of land use and transport planners and health and regeneration professionals at the key decision making stages of problem definition, problem solution and implementation. Beyond the defining work by Vigar et al. (2000) and Vigar (2002), there is little published research on the behavioural responses of these ‘webs of actors’ and the effects of their decisions on spatial dynamics and mobility choices.

The paper begins by examining the relationship between sustainability and integration. In this sense, this part of the paper is fairly taxonomic, reviewing the literature on how these two concepts have been developed. Section 2 develops this by examining the development of UK policy in relation to EU15. This is followed by a discussion of what an integrated urban transport policy might look like on the ground. The example of Malmö in Sweden is taken as a comparator of what can be achieved in a situation where the values and expectations on the use of environmental resources are different to the UK. Section 4 builds on this case study to conceptually elaborate the components of a sustainable transport system. This discussion forms the foundation for the construction of an analytical framework and identifies stages in the progress towards sustainable and integrated practices and outcomes in the UK context. This ladder of integration is used in the penultimate section to measure the extent of integration in two English cities, Bristol and Newcastle upon Tyne. These cities both function as employment hubs in their respective regions. Bristol is located in the prosperous southwest and Newcastle in the less prosperous northeast. They were chosen as case studies because of their diverse socio-economic histories in order to understand the infrastructure and institutional contexts of decision-making, as well as the actions and outcomes. The paper then moves on to consider the value and utility of the concept of integration setting the discussion within the UK model of policy-making.

## 2. Sustainability and integration

Ideas on sustainability have evolved from longstanding concerns about the environmental impact of new and existing developments, voiced within the land use planning system, to incorporate social, economic, and

sometimes ethical perspectives. The UK government’s 1998 policy statement (DETR, 1998) crystallised sustainable development or sustainability (used interchangeably) as:

1. Social progress which recognises the needs of everyone;
2. Effective protection of the environment, limiting global effects;
3. Prudent use of natural resources; and
4. Maintenance of high and stable levels of economic growth and employment.

Integrating these four principles into the practice of decision-making on transport and land use has been a challenge. The literature suggests that there are two explanations for the limited progress. Firstly, the problem according to Diamond (1993), Baeten (2000), and Stead (2003) is the failure to elaborate precisely what role integration might play within a sustainable transport vision at the local policy level. Despite repeated calls from the UK government for more policy co-ordination in the local delivery of services, little advice has been forthcoming on how to achieve either horizontal sectoral integration (between local authority departments and service providers) or vertical inter-governmental integration (between different tiers of government) (Hull, 2004; CfIT, 2001). Government research focuses essentially on project implementation, issues of trust between key stakeholders, and the barriers to effective joint working rather than the possible synergies between policy streams.

The terms ‘integration’ and ‘sustainable development’ are clearly ill-defined but have, nevertheless, gained legitimacy through the coordinating role they play in bringing together different disciplines and diverse interest groups through the progressive wash the concept gives to a number of heterogeneous agendas. The operationalisation of these terms raises complex political decisions between enduring social values on the one hand and a diverse set of socio-economic, environmental and geographical opportunity costs on the other. Gaining consensus on how to reach the sustainable future vision seems much more difficult in the present day systems of multi-level governance than the predominantly elected administrations of the past (Hull, 2003).

It is our failure to pay much attention to policy implementation that represents the second barrier highlighted in the literature. Sustainable development practice requires that economic growth simultaneously supports the needs of everyone and conserves our natural resources, and that social policy underpins economic performance and complements environmental policy. Challis et al. (1998) chart how the streams of government funds for infrastructure, ‘public’ service and taxation policies interact, compete, and conflict in

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