

Summary

Establishing objectives is key to the overall quality of the appraisal of planning proposals and their ultimate results. The relative performance of proposals against objectives plays a key role in the appraisal process.

Objectives should be developed in accordance with the following principles:

- Objectives should express the *outcomes* sought in the study area as opposed to any of the activities planned to achieve them;
- The formulation of objectives should take full account of a thorough investigation of the *root causes* underlying identified problems;
- The development process should be inclusive;
- If targets are associated with objectives they should be SMART (Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant and Timed);
- The objectives should reflect the core values of the planning proposal rather than established practice or what is easiest to measure;
- A regular dialogue should take place between planners and funders throughout the objective-setting process (as during the planning exercise as a whole);
- Planners should be clear as to the geographic area of concern (the *domain*) and any existing priorities with which their efforts must be consistent;
- Any existing resources in the form of previously established sets of objectives or data resulting from surveys or consultation exercises should be fully used in setting current objectives;
- The Government's five objectives can aid the planners in checking that they have considered all possible impact areas but they should not necessarily drive the process of setting objectives, which should be based on a proper understanding of key concerns and problems *in the study area*.

Any application for funding or approval from the Scottish Executive will be judged, in part, on whether there is a clear statement of objectives supported by an explanation of their derivation.

2. OBJECTIVES

2.1 Introduction

2.1.1 This chapter is intended to provide the users of STAG with guidance on the principles involved in setting objectives. The structure of the chapter is as follows:

- an explanation of the terminology involved (§2.2);
- the role of objectives (§2.3);
- why there is a need to set planning objectives (§2.4);
- the extent of effort to be expended in setting objectives (§2.5);
- the principles that should govern the formulation of objectives (§2.6); and
- practical guidance on setting objectives (§2.7).

2.1.2 The chapter concludes with a section on alternative exercises to aid formulation of objectives (§2.8).

2.2 Terminology

2.2.1 *Planners* will be used generically in this document to describe those charged with carrying out any exercise for which STAG provides the framework. This acknowledges that the individuals and organisations involved will in fact vary considerably. *Funders* is again a generic term describing those who receive the report of the appraisal exercise and who either make funding recommendations, release monies or give approval to proceed. *Study area* is used in general to describe the geographic area which the planners must consider in their deliberations. These simplifications should not hinder understanding of what follows.

2.2.2 The term *stakeholders* is used frequently in this chapter and STAG more generally. It should be understood to refer to all individuals and organisations which stand to be affected by the conclusions reached. This definition naturally includes governmental bodies with responsibilities relating to a study area. Stakeholder involvement is discussed more generally in Chapter 13.

2.2.3 In this and subsequent chapters, a distinction needs to be made between three classes of objectives:

- the term *planning objectives* will be used to describe those objectives established or adopted by the planners for the purposes of the planning exercise in particular (the task for which they are using STAG);
- the term *Government objectives* (and sometimes *national objectives*) will be used to refer to the five appraisal objectives established by the White Paper *Travel Choices for Scotland*: these are environment, safety, economy, integration and accessibility; Government objectives implies also a national level perspective, reflecting Government's need to balance the needs and resources of different areas and communities;

- *external objectives* will be used to describe the set of existing objectives to which the planners must pay heed in their work. By definition, external objectives are set by a third party or, if set by the body undertaking the appraisal, are independent from the exercise in hand. External objectives may be national, regional or local and may be more or less precise, examples are:
 - national targets for road safety, cycling and road traffic reduction;
 - local targets for the control of road traffic set under the Road Traffic Reduction Act or for public transport use in a local transport strategy.

2.2.4 Planning objectives will typically be local in scope but it is quite possible for the geographic compass of planning objectives to be greater than that of certain external objectives relevant to a given exercise. For example, a transport corridor study may well have to be conducted with awareness of the existing objectives (i.e. external objectives) of the local transport strategies for several areas through which the corridor passes.

2.2.5 A number of other words and expressions are frequently used to describe objectives. Examples are:

- *Goals* and *aims*, which are generally used in describing strategic objectives;
- *Targets*, which normally refer to measures and indicators in which objectives can be expressed; and
- *Thresholds*, which might be minimum requirements or “hurdles” which a proposal must pass.

2.2.6 Different authors will also use terms such as “criteria” and “indicators” to describe the thing measured, such as numbers of accidents. Sometimes, a hierarchy of objectives is proposed which goes from a general or strategic statement of an objective (for example to “improve safety”) to increasingly specific aims (for example “to reduce traffic accidents by 25% in the study area by 2005”). In this guidance, a single term (*objectives*) is used throughout, on the assumption that it will generally be clear what is meant.

2.2.7 Planners can, if they wish, create more complex structures, especially where the achievement of final or strategic “outcome” objectives require the achievement of intermediate objectives and/or targets. As discussed later in the chapter on monitoring and evaluation, the use of such a hierarchy is generally useful in establishing a monitoring framework and for formal evaluation, and hence should be considered at the objective-setting stage. Simplicity, clarity and adherence to SMART principles (as set out at §2.6.5 et seq.), will ensure that there should be no difficulty in terms of either precision or understanding of objectives.

2.2.8 In addition to objectives, three other classes are defined and used particularly in this chapter and in Chapter 3, but more generally in this document:

- Problems;
- Constraints; and
- Uncertainties.

Each of these has a role to play in the setting of objectives, as described later in this Chapter.

- 2.2.9 There are many terms used to describe the outcome of transport planning activities, including strategy, programme, plan, scheme, project and proposal. More generically, the terms measure and intervention are also used. In STAG, the term *proposal* is used for any type of transport measure which is being developed and appraised, including strategies, plans, programmes, schemes and projects. However, as these terms are not used consistently by planners, the term proposal has been adopted to cover all types of measures. A proposal can therefore be construction of a piece of infrastructure, the development of new transport services or a new or amended strategy, and can include combinations of these.
- 2.2.10 The term options is used interchangeably with the term alternative proposals, and, as with the term proposal, will include all types of measure noted above.

2.3 The Role of Objectives

- 2.3.1 In this chapter guidance is provided on developing appropriate objectives for a given planning exercise. This reflects the principle that objectives that are pertinent to the transport issues in a study area should play a central role in the development and appraisal of options (and, to an extent, in their development). Similarly, where Government funding is likely to be involved, consideration must be given to the Government's five objectives and to the national level perspective. The guidance on appraisal in subsequent chapters explains the interaction of planning objectives and the Government objectives in appraising options.
- 2.3.2 The value of setting objectives is that consideration of objectives focuses on ends rather than means. In the past, many transport projects have been developed from consideration of means – for example “build a road between A and B”. However, building a road may be only one way of achieving particular ends, and consideration of ends and alternative ways of achieving these, and the advantages and disadvantages of these alternatives, makes for good planning and sensible, rational choices for future investment.
- 2.3.3 This chapter focuses on *outcome* or *final objectives*. For example, a reduction in personal injury accidents is a final objective, which might be achieved in a number of ways. Final objectives or outcomes define or describe the changes desired in the planning area.
- 2.3.4 The establishment of a fund for safety improvements and the achievement of targets for the installation of traffic calming measures at agreed points are examples of *input* and *intermediate objectives*, respectively. These are necessary for the achievement of the final objectives, they are really steps in the process from expenditure (inputs) to achieving the final objectives (outcomes). As such, they are concerned with means rather than ends.
- 2.3.5 Input, intermediate and final objectives are all highly relevant to the processes of monitoring and evaluation, which are discussed in Chapter 15.

2.4 Why Set Planning Objectives?

2.4.1 Planners may well feel that there is a sufficiently clear-cut case for what they propose, or that the range of options is so limited as to make the setting of objectives unnecessary. Why therefore devote time to an exercise that is not going to affect materially the outcome of the planning process?

2.4.2 The setting of planning objectives is in fact important and potentially valuable for a number of reasons:

- Planning objectives provide all stakeholders with a clear indication of what the planners are trying to accomplish;
- They serve as a basis for directing and guiding the entire study process;
- They can provide motivation, unity and integration;
- They allow accountability from the funder's and taxpayer's perspectives both during the remainder of the planning and implementation process and after (a key concern in light of the need for monitoring and evaluation); and
- They introduce clarity where there may exist strong vested interests and entrenched views on priorities.

2.4.3 In the context of STAG, they offer the following additional benefits:

- Planning objectives allow the proper appraisal of candidate proposals, allowing the decision maker to make the most appropriate choice;
- They can help the planners to develop apposite and creative proposals by focussing thought;
- They establish the main purpose for proceeding with a decision thus allowing the project development to be revalidated to avoid project 'creep'.

2.4.4 Thus, even for planners who feel that their options are so simple as to make objectives superfluous, there are potential benefits in their formulation, even if the ultimate proposal is unaltered: its fitness for the job will be apparent to all stakeholders (and crucially amongst these, the funder) and the means by which it is delivered may be improved.

2.4.5 The definition of planning objectives for a particular exercise is not new to STAG. The case for the formulation of appropriate planning objectives is quite compelling; indeed it is best understood by considering for a moment the many unwelcome potential outcomes of proceeding without objectives, aptly summarised by Mark Twain: "if you don't know where you are going you are sure to end up somewhere else".

2.5 How Much Effort?

2.5.1 The question of the effort necessary for the formulation of planning objectives is a special case of the general issue of how much resource to devote to planning

overall: money and time spent on planning cannot be spent on delivery, so planners must be aware of the need to demonstrate the value added by this activity and any particular aspect of it.

- 2.5.2 It is likely that effort required will reflect to some degree the planners' budget, time-scale and the complexity of their ambit. But, on the whole, the gathering and analysis of large quantities of data will only improve marginally upon the aptness of objectives. In contrast, the application of structured thinking and proper consultation will pay significant dividends with perhaps much smaller resource implications. If in doubt, planners should discuss this issue with the funders to establish what level of rigour will be necessary for the circumstances of the exercise. The principles which follow may also aid the planners in determining their approach. In general, it is not unreasonable to suggest that 10-20% of planning time and budget could be devoted to objective development.

2.6 Principles of Setting Planning Objectives

- 2.6.1 The following principles are put forward as being appropriate to the setting of objectives, regardless of the planning environment.

Outcome Focus

- 2.6.2 Transport planning should be about delivering the desired changes in a study area. Objectives set should reflect this and should therefore express *outcomes*. For example, a roads authority may want to reduce delay on a given link of a road and may conclude that the provision of an additional lane is the preferred means to achieve this. Whilst it would be appropriate to set an objective concerning the reduction of delay (made sufficiently specific, in keeping with SMART principles set out at §2.6.5 *et seq.*), an objective based on the building of that additional capacity would miss the point. The building of the additional lane would merely be a means to the end of reducing delay. It would be dangerous to conclude that the provision of a new lane meant the job was complete: delay may not reduce as a result – it is not inconceivable that in some circumstances delay might even increase.

Inclusion

- 2.6.3 Following the comment above concerning consultation, planners should ensure stakeholder participation in their activities from the earliest point. This must extend to the objective-setting process, in keeping with the content of Chapter 13. The benefits of effective participation at this stage can be as follows:
- Stakeholders can, by becoming involved in objective-setting, ensure that their opinions and preferences are fed into the planning process;
 - The trade-offs and constraints inherent in planning can be communicated very effectively to stakeholders at this initial stage;

- Stakeholders' understanding of the objectives arrived at increases the likelihood that they will accept the findings of subsequent option development and appraisal activities;
- Planners may discover constraints and opportunities of which they were unaware or may appreciate anew the true interactions between the priorities of stakeholders.

2.6.4 The involvement of stakeholders has inevitable time and cost implications which must be borne in mind. It is certainly possible, however, to carry out even a modest piece of consultation and derive benefit from it, provided a genuine attempt is made to canvass opinion widely and to be open to the full range of responses.

SMART Objectives

2.6.5 SMART stands for Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant and Timed. A SMART objective will therefore be:

- Specific, in that it will say in precise terms what is sought (e.g. a 10% reduction in average vehicle delay on a given length of road);
- Measurable, in that there will exist means to establish to stakeholders' satisfaction whether or not the objective has been achieved (e.g. a reduction in the quantity of PM₁₀ present in the atmosphere), crucial when considering monitoring and evaluation as explained in Chapter 15;
- Attainable, in that there is general agreement that the objective set can be reached;
- Relevant, in that the objective is a sensible indicator or proxy for the change which is sought (e.g. a proportion of development to take place on "brown-field sites" as a proxy for minimising the damage of the natural environment by land use development);
- Timed, in that the objective will be associated with an agreed future point by which it will have been met.

2.6.6 Care must be taken to avoid the development of specific objectives which fail to take account of the subtleties of a planning environment. For example, if a planning area contains both urban and rural sections, the traffic conditions in these are likely to differ; any SMART objective set for the improvement of traffic conditions should take account of the differences and treat them intelligently. On the whole, the use of minimum or maximum values is likelier to avoid this pitfall than, say, stipulating a change in the average value of a given quantity across an area.

2.6.7 SMART objectives are not easy to set; they demand more thought and impose greater accountability than the more vague statements of intent which are often seen in planning documents. There are, however, several reasons for making the necessary effort in arriving at them:

- SMART objectives provide unparalleled focus on the job to be done and, if intelligently set, may foster a shared enthusiasm for their achievement;
- They render explicit all conflicts between priorities and therefore force a proper resolution of them;

- 2.6.8 In addition to the accountability they bring, they also provide a unique opportunity for recognition of achievement. As discussed in more detail in Chapter 15 *Monitoring and Evaluation*, indicators must be developed from the planning objectives established for the project. It is therefore important that planners should aim to set SMART objectives from the outset with the intention of developing meaningful indicators for monitoring and evaluation purposes.
- 2.6.9 However, it is recognised that, in specific circumstances, this cannot always be achieved. The following section deals with objectives which are hard to measure.

Being Value-led

- 2.6.10 There is a history of objectives being set in part on the basis of the ease with which their attainment could be measured. This plainly biases results. Planners should concentrate on being value-led and should not simply formulate objectives with an eye to measurement. It may be necessary at a later stage to define appropriate proxies for objectives which are particularly hard to measure against; there may even be occasions where planners conclude that measurement against a particular objective simply cannot be done. In neither case should this lead to the desertion of the objective. At the very least, the formulation of an objective of the latter sort will present a research imperative and it may help to take emphasis away from less important (but more measurable) impacts.
- 2.6.11 To summarise, planners should focus first on what is wanted. The measurement of this is secondary.

Identifying Root Causes

- 2.6.12 It is common for the so-called problems of transport to be symptoms of underlying conditions. Attempts to tackle those problems without first analysing the background can be misguided or unsuccessful because they ignore important interactions.
- 2.6.13 In working towards objectives, planners should attempt, wherever possible, to follow identified problems or opportunities back along the causal chain to understand the full picture. For example, traffic congestion can broadly be defined as an excess of demand for road capacity over supply. On its own, this does not provide any insight, however. Analysis is required of both supply and demand to see how congestion is occurring and to answer the question of whether there is a need to increase supply or reduce demand, or both, or neither. The changes within supply and demand across periods of time, geographic areas and user groups are also important considerations in addressing the issue of congestion. The analysis of problems is considered further in Chapter 3.
- 2.6.14 In many planning exercises, the full understanding discussed above develops over time as the results of investigations are analysed. This may mean that planners are forced to make working assumptions pending receipt of a fuller range of data; it is rare, however, that informed guesses are shown at a later stage to be entirely incorrect. Some of the analysis exercises listed below in the section on *developing objectives* may be helpful in agreeing any necessary working assumptions.

- 2.6.15 The need for planners to look at root causes should not be interpreted as implying an equivalent requirement to set objectives at the root cause level. It may still be appropriate to set an objective to reduce congestion by a certain amount, say, but by understanding causal interactions, planners should be far better equipped to see whether the resultant SMART objective is realistic. The process obviously also aids understanding of what types of intervention might promote achievement of the objective.

Dialogue

- 2.6.16 Conflicts are almost bound to arise in the development of planning objectives and it is the planners' task to take proper account of any internal conflicts amongst the objectives developed for a given exercise. It is equally important, though, to identify and address any conflicts which may arise between planning and external objectives. The relationship between the two is dealt with in more detail below but the need to manage such conflicts is one of several arguments for a continuous dialogue between the planners and funders. Another, mentioned above, is the reaching of agreement on the resource appropriate to objective setting. Dialogue between planners and decision makers will be beneficial throughout the planning exercise. Time and resources spent on the development of a consensus of clear and SMART objectives is likely to avoid potentially more serious conflicts later in the planning process.

Clarity on Domain and Existing Priorities

- 2.6.17 The precision with which the domain (the geographic and demographic scope) of planning exercises is known will differ. A transport corridor or area-wide study may have an ambiguously defined study area (if it is meant to address the travel to work areas of different modes for example); those preparing a local transport strategy will be operating with established boundaries between authorities. Nevertheless, it is essential that the scope of the exercise be explicitly addressed at the beginning of the objective-setting exercise. The merits of a given proposal may appear very different when measured against a particular objective if the domain is considered to be the population as a whole on the one hand, or only those without access to a car on the other. If planners are aiming at particular sectors in their deliberations, this is a matter that should be raised in advance with the funders; the possibility of unplanned, cross-border impacts must equally be allowed for. The discussion of the relationship between planning and external objectives below pursues this matter further.
- 2.6.18 Planners should be aware of any fixed targets that have relevance to the exercise they are carrying out. For example, given established national targets for the improvement of road safety and road traffic stabilisation, planners will need to ensure that the objectives they establish, whilst not necessarily supporting them directly, do not stand in opposition to them.

Best Use of Existing Resources

- 2.6.19 Making the best use of existing resources is important. Planners may have available a set of established objectives formulated for a previous exercise or

intended to govern activities in general. Alteration of existing objectives is quicker and less arduous than their formulation from scratch. A review of these may well reveal that, with limited revisions, they will prove suitable for the task. The review should be conducted properly, however: objectives which are a few years old may fail to reflect important developments; general objectives set by a local authority's transport department may not be sufficiently specific for the purposes of a particular planning exercise.

- 2.6.20 There may equally exist objectives set by a relevant external planning organisation which can be used as a framework for the development exercise. Planners looking at the question of road-user charging, say, might find it helpful to start with the established transport objectives of the local authority.
- 2.6.21 Just as objectives may exist which planners can use to good effect, there may be significant evidence available concerning stakeholder opinion on the subjects in question. Because consultation is increasingly a requirement of the statutory planning process, much formal consultation and market research is carried out which, if used with care, can save the planners a great deal of time in their efforts to assimilate a picture of perceptions and expectations.

Role of Government Objectives

Use in Formulating Objectives

- 2.6.22 The Government's five objectives capture all, or the great majority of, the impacts of a transport proposal, and hence provide a strategic framework which can be used in developing and setting planning objectives. They also provide the tests which will be applied by Government wherever Government funding and/or approval is required for a proposal. Planners need to be aware that, in the appraisal, proposals will be tested against three sets of objectives:
- The planning objectives established by the promoter;
 - The Government's five objectives (environment, safety, economy, integration and accessibility);
 - Any other relevant objectives relating to transport, land-use or wider policies, identified either in the objective formulation process or during scoping of the integration aspects (i.e. external objectives).
- 2.6.23 The performance of a transport proposal against the first of these sets of objectives is of course crucial from the planner perspective as this represent the outcomes which the planners wish to achieve for their particular area. These objectives are those against which the planners will test alternative proposals, in the process of option generation and development. The choice of the preferred proposal and the rationale for that choice should therefore be founded upon the planning objectives.
- 2.6.24 National objectives are central to the appraisal, as the Scottish Executive has a national role and must balance the competing needs of different areas and communities and assess the extent to which transport proposals represent value for money in allocating available funds. This therefore is the principal reason for carrying out appraisal against the Government's five national objectives.

- 2.6.25 In addition, as the Government's objectives capture all, or the great majority, of potential impacts of a transport proposal, a thorough appraisal using these objectives will alert the planner to any unexpected or undesired impacts additional to those which the planning objectives were designed to encompass.
- 2.6.26 The Government's objectives provide planners with a valuable framework for use in forming their planning objectives and planners may wish to consider how their planning objectives would be expressed within that framework. However, the injunction "to protect and enhance the built and natural environment" (one possible interpretation of the inclusion of *environment* amongst the objectives), say, lacks the detail necessary to make it immediately operational, and hence more specific objectives will generally need to be developed.
- 2.6.27 Certainly, planners should take full advantage of any measures used in the STAG appraisal (the appraisal against the five Government objectives) which are of demonstrably direct relevance to the objectives they are establishing. This will ease the process of appraising against planning objectives and may make the appraisal results more comprehensible to funders.
- 2.6.28 However, while the Government objectives provide a framework to ensure all impacts are considered, and the sub-objectives provide more detailed guidance, planners should not begin the process of formulating their planning objectives by considering only the national sub-objectives. This could mean the desertion of important local objectives or the inclusion of items which, for the planning context in question, are not relevant.
- 2.6.29 It is good practice to consider how well planning objectives will "nest" with those Government objectives with which the respective planning objectives have the closest links. This will make understanding and comparing the relative performance of proposals against planning and Government objectives altogether easier.
- 2.6.30 The third set of objectives, the external objectives, can quite reasonably be seen as constraints upon the proposals being put forward. A clear conflict between a proposal and, say, established land-use planning policy in the area is likely to jeopardise its potential for both funding and implementation. A positive contribution towards the achievement of other relevant objectives will be to the proposal's credit.
- 2.6.31 For proposals requiring SEA, it should be noted that the SEA Regulations require that the environmental protection objectives, established at International, European Community or National level, which are relevant to the plan or programme, are taken into account during the SEA and plan preparation.

Conflicts Between Planning and Other Objectives

- 2.6.32 Whilst it may not be possible to avoid conflicts altogether, it is sensible to seek to minimise them by giving due consideration to Government objectives and by carrying out a thorough audit of existing external objectives, prior to developing planning objectives. It is more than likely that this process will enable compatible

objectives to be developed, particularly given the breadth of the national objectives. For proposals requiring SEA, it should be noted that the SEA Regulations require that this process takes place.

- 2.6.33 Where important differences remain, it would be prudent to raise these with the funders in order to establish a way forward. This will undoubtedly be a more satisfactory approach than attempting to debate the matter once a proposal has been rejected because, despite meeting planning objectives, its performance against the Government's objectives proved unsatisfactory.
- 2.6.34 Even where there is no inconsistency between planning and Government objectives, there may be differences in priorities, which lead to rejection of a proposal for Government funding. The matter of domain or spatial priorities is potentially important here, as the planner is likely to be interested in local impacts while Government is interested in national level impacts. A proposal for a road project, for example, may be desirable from the point of view of a local planning authority because of safety and local accessibility benefits, whilst Government may reject it on the grounds that it would have undesirable economic and environmental consequences.
- 2.6.35 Here, the conflict arises not from inconsistent priorities but differing conceptions of domain. The sensible response to this is to assess the consequences of likely external impacts as well as local impacts, and consider the possible national as well as local gains and losses at the objective development and option testing stages. Regardless of the potential benefits within the area of the planning authority's interest, its appraisal of any proposal should include some understanding of effects beyond its boundary. Consideration of Government's objectives at the national level by the planner can help identify potential conflicts arising from different conceptions of domain.

2.7 Developing Planning Objectives

- 2.7.1 There is no one right way to develop planning objectives; in fact, the adoption of the principles above will mean that planners will approach this stage from quite different starting points.
- 2.7.2 The following approach is set out as an example rather than a template. It is an effective approach which can be carried out quite quickly. It can also function effectively when used in a more detailed planning exercise involving substantial consultation elements. Its outputs can readily be incorporated into a partially developed objective framework by a process of pair-wise comparison.

Setting Objectives Using Analysis of Problems, Constraints & Uncertainties

- 2.7.3 This approach allows for a broad consideration of the actual and potential situation in the study area and encourages both lateral thinking and openness to perhaps unexpected factors and issues. It draws significantly on the advice given in Chapter 3.

Problems and Opportunities

- 2.7.4 Planners should ask what are the key problems affecting the study area. They may approach this task with an existing set of defined problems (such as those set out in a study brief, for example) but there are likely to be many other aspects of life in the area that are affected by transport. Together with considering the widest range of issues, planners should adhere to the principle of seeking out the root causes.
- 2.7.5 The following are some suggested areas to consider in identifying problems (this is not an exhaustive list):
- General quality of life: how does transport contribute directly or indirectly to the quality of life in an area; is the contribution on balance, positive or negative;
 - The economic performance of an area: employment, investment, development of business opportunities, and land use in general;
 - Amenities and public services: what is the role of transport in enabling access, and are there groups in society who are disadvantaged by current transport provision;
 - The environment: how does current infrastructure and its use contribute to environmental problems, both locally, nationally and globally;
 - Safety and security (real and perceived);
 - Use of transport generally: are there real or perceived conflicts between users of different transport types or journey-making habits;
 - Public transport: its quality, its use and how is this affected by the provision of fixed and other infrastructure;
 - What is the scope to increase use of other forms of transport (walking, cycling, horse-riding).
- 2.7.6 It is common in transport planning to focus on what is wrong and how to fix it. This approach misses the very important point that transport can unlock opportunities to make life better in an area. It is helpful therefore to ask the question “what good things could emerge in the study area from changes to transport?” It is important not to be unrealistic about what can be achieved but, at the same time, to imagine the extent to which things might change. For example, if road safety in the study area could be considerably improved, what might happen to residential roads? Could children play more freely?
- 2.7.7 It may be most helpful to look at opportunities using the same series of suggested areas listed for problem analysis. Alternatively, planners may consider the problems identified and ask whether there are any naturally opposite opportunities. For example, a current problem that walking is dangerous could be linked to an opportunity to make walking a popular recreational activity with urban safety and health benefits.

Constraints and Uncertainties

- 2.7.8 Constraints are slightly subtler than problems and opportunities. Here, instead of looking for things which are bad now or which could be bad in the future, planners should think of factors which might stand in the way of tackling problems or taking

opportunities. They will ordinarily stand outside the planners' sphere of influence, but this need not be the case.

- 2.7.9 The following are some areas in which constraints might exist (again, this is not an exhaustive list):
- Statutory/legal (planning boundaries, procedures, inter-departmental issues);
 - Funding (quantity, availability, conditions imposed);
 - Geography/topology (features constraining change);
 - Future events/developments;
 - Vested interests or sensitivities;
 - Habits (responses to proposals, behavioural responses).
- 2.7.10 It is easy to confuse constraints as defined here with problems. Planners should therefore be careful only to consider things here which fit the description above. There may be things that are both current problems and constraints, in which case they should be considered under both headings.
- 2.7.11 Uncertainties encompass matters relevant to the planning exercise but which have yet to be decided at the time of the planning exercise. A local authority may have to develop its local transport strategy without knowing whether a major trunk road scheme will be built. What is important in considering uncertainties is to bear in mind that the ideal proposal would fit with whatever outcome transpires. And whilst the ideal proposal will elude the planners in almost all instances, there remains a need to set objectives which do not depend for their relevance or attainability on a particular outcome. This subject is discussed more fully in Chapter 3.

Moving from Problems, Constraints and Uncertainties to Planning Objectives

- 2.7.12 Having listed problems, opportunities, constraints and uncertainties, planners should now attempt to draw these items together into a cogent framework of draft objectives. The term 'draft objectives' is used because it is expected that at this stage, objectives will not be SMART, instead indicating the areas of desired change and its direction.
- 2.7.13 The Government framework provides a useful starting point for this, so planners may wish to use the five objectives as a guide (the interpretation which follows each is an attempt to encapsulate the range of impact areas under each heading):
- Environment (maximising the quality of the built and natural environment for enjoyment by all);
 - Safety (reducing the risk and incidence of accidents and improving the security of all transport users);
 - Economy (saving people's and business's time and money and facilitating desired economic development);
 - Integration (fitting the transport network together and ensuring a rational relationship between transport and land-use and wider policy);

- Accessibility (providing everyone (not just users but also non-users) with the means to travel to opportunities of all kinds).
- 2.7.14 There is no reason to expect an equal number of objectives to be formulated under each of the Government objectives.
- 2.7.15 Where there already exist other, perhaps more pertinent, objectives (as suggested at §2.6.19 et seq.), planners may find it more helpful to work from those. Consideration of the Government objectives would still be helpful in checking that all areas have been covered.
- 2.7.16 For proposals requiring SEA, it should be noted that the STAG environment objective does not cover all of the topics that need to be included in SEA. An SEA must address the following topics:
- Biodiversity, flora and fauna;
 - Population and human health;
 - Water and soil;
 - Air;
 - Climate factors;
 - Cultural heritage and landscape.
 - Material assets.
- 2.7.17 It is quite likely that this process will run itself since the discussion of problems, opportunities etc should have prompted a focussed idea of planning issues. If this is not the case, planners can use the list of problems and opportunities to generate objectives. For example, if a problem is “bus services are unreliable”, an objective which might seem to follow from this would be “remove obstacles (such as illegal parking) to bus movement”. It may be helpful to number the objectives that are developed and cross-reference the problems/opportunities from which they have arisen. This will help to ensure that all the important items identified in the first stage feature in some way in the objectives.
- 2.7.18 The objectives are likely to spring mostly from problems and opportunities but constraints should still play a part at this stage: an objective based on the removal of a constraint may in fact prove the most effective way of relieving a problem or grasping an opportunity.
- 2.7.19 It may be helpful for the planner to develop a table, in matrix form, that lists all of the objectives against all of the problems as shown in the example below. This can then be used to demonstrate that all of the problems relate to one or more measurable objective and also that each objective defined is matched against an identified problem.

Table 2.1: Comparison Table of Problems versus Objectives

		Problem 1	Problem 2	Problem 3	Problem 4	Problem 5	...	Problem x
Environment	Objective 1	X			X			
	Objective 2			X				
Safety	Objective 3		X					
Economy	Objective 4							
	...							
	Objective n					X		
Integration	Objective n+1							
	Objective n+2							X
Accessibility	Objective n+3		X					
	...							
	Objective m				X			

Refinement, Identification of Conflicts

- 2.7.20 The above process is likely to produce a substantial number of draft objectives which now will need to be worked up in more detail. Planners should aim to apply the SMART principles set out at §2.6.5 *et seq.* in moving towards precise and relevant final objectives.
- 2.7.21 It is important to remember that the specific values associated with objectives can be altered at a subsequent stage in light of new data or experience, so planners should not be unduly wary of proposing provisional figures.
- 2.7.22 The process of refining the various objectives will make any conflicts between them increasingly explicit. It is helpful to address these conflicts directly by comparing each pair of SMART objectives and identifying those for which there is a possibility that one could be met at the cost of achieving the other. Where conflicts are identified, it will be necessary to do one of two things:
- One or both of the objectives can be altered so as to remove the conflict;
 - Accept that weighting will ensure the relative importance of these objectives which will be reflected in the outcome of the appraisal.
- 2.7.23 An important part of the refinement process is to ask whether the objectives developed are sufficiently specific in terms of:
- Demographic or social groups;
 - Modes;
 - Geographic areas; or

- The focus of the proposal (e.g. provision of transport, management of demand, other areas such as provision of information).

2.8 Alternative Exercises to Aid Formulation of Planning Objectives

2.8.1 In addition to the process explained above, the following exercises (drawn from classical strategic planning methods) may be very helpful to planners in identifying key issues on the way to formulating objectives. Any of them could usefully complement the problems, opportunities and constraints approach; planners may instead wish to formulate their own method including elements listed below.

SWOT Analysis

2.8.2 A SWOT analysis (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities & Threats) is a well-established method for analysing the current and likely future state of a situation, service or organisation. Strengths and weaknesses are generally meant to apply to current conditions, with opportunities and threats their counterparts looking to the future.

2.8.3 Planners may find it helpful to look at the transport within the study area in general or focus on particular sectors or areas; they might instead look at particular journey types or groups within the population to build up a picture of priorities.

Structured Analysis

2.8.4 Tackling the following questions can be a useful way of identifying key issues and establishing how to respond to current and future challenges.

2.8.5 Planners may try to answer the following questions from the point of view of three time-spans. For example on the basis of a five-year plan, one suggestion is the next two years, two to five years from now, and five to twenty, though this should be agreed in light of the planning exercise. It should reflect an awareness of the long-term but concentrate in detail on the coming five years.

- What will be the transport demands of people and commerce?
- What will be the characteristics of the transport supply market?
- What will the local economy look like?
- What will change in the political and economic climate?
- What will change in the environment?
- What will change in the planning organisation? (if applicable)
- What resources will be available?

Strategic Choice

2.8.6 This process is designed to combine the setting of objectives with the consideration and selection of options to be taken forward. It is not described in detail here but further information concerning it can be found in *Planning under Pressure (1997)*. The principles are elaborated in Chapter 4.