Book review

TRANSPORT POLICY AND PLANNING IN GREAT BRITAIN

Peter Headicar, Routledge, Abingdon, 2009,
ISBN: 978-0-415-46987-6, £34.99, 496 pp.

The author, Peter Headicar, is a reader in transport planning at Oxford Brookes where he leads the postgraduate teaching programme in transport.

The introduction to this book expresses an intention to make sense of the extensive and often complex procedures involved in transport policy and planning. However, this book is far more than a reference textbook, as it provides wide-ranging background information on how planning requirements and procedures have evolved and how they meet the needs of those involved in using and gaining benefit (or otherwise!) from them.

The book is divided into five parts, comprising 25 chapters, with the parts being sub-titled The Nature of Transport, The Evolution of Transport Policy and Planning, Ends and Means, Strategies, Plans and Planning Procedures, and The Contemporary Policy Agenda.

The first three chapters (in part 1) cover the factors affecting the requirements and use of transport (including the economy, costs, and alternative means of transport), the background to demand (such as centres of population, destinations, and reasons for use), and the impacts of transport (including health and the environment).

The five chapters in part 2 discuss the developments of transport modes over time: pre-1955 (before mass motorisation); 1955–1979 (the motorway age); political effects post-1979; ‘new realism’ in the 1990s; and New Labour’s ‘new deal’ (1997–2004).

There are eight chapters in part 3: the first three covering ‘the

state’, and planning structures, and policy aims; the next four detailing policy instruments (infrastructure investment, regulation of vehicles and their operators and services, regulation of traffic, and fiscal measures); and the eighth behavioural changes.

The title of part 4 is Strategies, Plans and Planning Procedures and its six chapters cover national, regional, and local development strategies, local transport plans, project appraisal, and approvals procedures.

The final three chapters in part 5 look at the contemporary policy agenda, possible future scenarios, and ‘thinking afresh’.

At the end of the book is a seven-page bibliography, a four-page list of government publications and a 10-page index.

The 470 pages cannot really be described as ‘light’ reading but the text is nevertheless very readable and widely informative. There is undoubtedly a mine of information between the covers and it is likely that anyone needing to navigate planning procedures will find the book a valuable asset, not only in understanding what planning requirements involve but also how and why they have developed.

The book is written in an entertaining style with a very wide overview of factors contributing to the transport planning needs, such as urban and regional planning, environmental implications, and over-riding general policies. The layout of the book is well defined and clearly (and attractively) presented and the extensive index should permit easy access to particular information, be it the Red Flag Act of 1865, the Railways Act of 2005, or virtually any relevant information in between.

This should be a valuable book to anyone with interest in the transport planning field.

PHIL EVANS