



RTPI Scotland

mediation of space · making of place

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Commission on Housing and Wellbeing
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Email to consultation@housingandwellbeing.org

28 November 2014

Dear Sir/ Madam

**COMMISSION ON HOUSING AND WELLBEING:
SUBMISSION FROM ROYAL TOWN PLANNING INSTITUTE SCOTLAND**

The Royal Town Planning Institute (RTPI) is the champion of planning and the planning profession. We work to promote the art and science of planning for the public benefit. We have around 2,100 members in Scotland and a worldwide membership of nearly 23,000. We:

- support policy development to improve approaches to planning for the benefit of the public;
- maintain the professional standards of our members;
- support our members, and therefore the majority of the planning workforce, to have the skills and knowledge they need to deliver planning effectively;
- maintain high standards of planning education;
- develop and promote new thinking, ideas and approaches which can improve planning;
- support our membership to work with others who have a role in developing places in Scotland; and
- improve the understanding of planning and the planning system to policy makers, politicians, practitioners and the general public.

RTPI Scotland is grateful for the opportunity to provide comments to the Commission on Housing and Wellbeing. Our submission comprises this cover letter and accompanying document including responses to the questions set by the Commission.

Planning is about creating great places for people. It does this through providing vision on how best to shape our communities over the short, medium and long term. Scottish Government is currently reforming the planning system and a key part of this is the move

towards a plan-led system where Development Plans provide the direction on the future of places. Planning isn't about saying no; it is about implementing a positive vision of a sustainable future and so the planning system has an important role to play in delivering the right developments in the right place at the right time.

There have been a number of comments and debates about planning for housing in the last few months including the RICS Scottish Housing Commission, the RTPI publication *Delivering Large Scale Housing: Unlocking Schemes and Sites to Help Meet the UK's Housing Needs* and a recent conference and series of discussions held by Scottish Government. RTPI Scotland is keen to use this debate to ensure planning and planners are seen as key to providing solutions on these issues, especially in the run up to Scottish Parliamentary Election in May 2016. Given this we are working to initiate a discussion that focusses the debate on the important roles that planning can play, as well as the things we need to do this.

We have set out ten propositions to start this discussion. These are not necessarily Institute policy, rather they aim to stimulate debate and discussion to help shape a short policy paper that we hope to publish in spring 2015. The starting point is that we want to give everyone in Scotland the opportunity to have a safe and comfortable home. The propositions then ask how we can plan and deliver housing growth that provides sustainable, high quality homes and communities. They are:

1. We need to accept that there is a need for housing growth

We need to accept that there is a need and demand for housing that has to be met. This will need to be embedded in culture of organisations with politicians and officers recognising the big picture. It may also challenge approaches to community involvement and engagement in housing developments and the resistance that can arise towards proposals. It also poses the question as to whether there is a need, or desire, to introduce national and/or regional housing targets.

2. We need to start with a vision

If we are to meet need and demand we need to show how why we need new housing, what we want to achieve and what new housing, communities and places will look like. This could help to ensure that stakeholders understand why housing needs to be provided and what benefits it can bring. This raises a number of questions around the role of a future National Planning Framework in providing more vision on housing and the subsequent roles of Strategic Development Plans (especially in terms of infrastructure provision) and the role of Local Development Plans.

3. We need to support planners to plan

We need to allow planners, planning and the planning system to have the right conditions to provide solutions. This may mean focussing the system on taking a proactive, upstream, and visionary approaches. It should recognise that planning can be integrative in supporting outcomes-focussed approaches. However, this may well depend on the corporate influence that planning has and whether it is recognised as a service that can provide value within the public sector.

4. We need to better link the vision with a delivery programme

We need bridge the gap between planning vision and the delivery of appropriate development. This means looking at how we can better match resources to planning vision (and vice versa) and move from development plan to investment plan. It asks

about the State's role to as enabler and investor and whether it has the powers and interventions needed to make this happen. It opens the debate on how engaged the public sector needs to be in assembling land and whether there a delivery models that should be explored such as development corporations. And it asks questions of the current Section 75 model.

5. We need to more effectively link development and infrastructure

We need to make the case for, and show the value of, linking investments in infrastructure with development, and vice versa. This asks if infrastructure policy, allocation and investment has a long term vision with proper use of master planning rather than ad hoc developments. It means exploring if local authorities need to/ can take on investment from developers and make more effective use of it borrowing powers. And it prompts the question on how we can have upfront and upstream infrastructure and use this to minimise risk for developers, investors and communities.

6. We need to create certainty and share risk and reward

Perceived risk in housing development is restricting borrowing, investment and development. Given this there is a need to examine who is best placed to take risks and how risk can be shared. It also asks how proactive, upstream planning can provide more certainty for investment and if local authorities can work with the private sector through Joint Ventures, Local Asset Back Vehicles, and funding models such as Tax Incremental Financing, Prudential Borrowing, Bonds and underwriting.

7. We need to think and act spatially

The public sector tends to think in terms of programmes, funding streams and initiatives, rather than about places. This can often lead to a lack of spatial thinking and limited policy and investment based on place. Given this, there is a need to promote and look at how to have more effective links between community planning and spatial planning. We should also be gathering evidence that articulates and recognises the value of creating good places.

8. We need to deliver places, not just houses

We need to move thinking and policy away from thinking of housing in terms of units and numbers so that it takes a more holistic view of homes as part of communities and places. As part of this there is a need to see value of a home being measured beyond a simple market value and look to the length of its contribution to a community and the economic, social, health and prevention benefits.

9. We need to identify sustainable locations

We need to examine where new housing can be located so as to maximise sustainable development. This needs to cover questions such as can we rely on brownfield? What role for town/ city/ village extensions? Do we need new settlements? What should be the role for NPF in facilitating and influencing this? What future for Green Belt?

10. We need to build design quality in from the start of the process

We need to ensure that we maximise the quality of future developments and the roles of the Place Standard and how we measure quality.

These ten propositions detailed above are relevant to the Commissions questions on housing and wellbeing, and could form part of the debate with regard to the health, wellbeing, and placemaking agendas.

RTPI has also published a “Planning Horizons” research paper in October 2014 “[Promoting Healthy Cities: Why planning is critical to a healthy urban future](#)” which demonstrates the role of planning in creating healthy places. The report states:

“In the twenty-first century, we need to develop a new urban agenda focused on healthy placemaking for all. Planning in the broadest sense – from development management and infrastructure to the location of health and community services – can play a central role in creating environments that enhance people’s health and wellbeing. We need to develop more integrated strategies for healthy placemaking, gather greater intelligence on the social and economic determinants of urban health to guide decisions and investments, reform and strengthen institutions to develop systems of governance that urban populations need, and involve more professions and communities to promote healthy cities.”

Furthermore, the RTPI policy paper “[Delivering Large Scale Housing: Unlocking Schemes and Sites to Help Meet the UK’s Housing Needs](#)” (September 2013) set out 15 practical recommendations to overcome barriers to delivering large scale housing which may come into play as part of the Commissions deliberations on what more can be done in the medium and longer term to improve investment in housing and deliver the homes we need whilst pushing for increased quality and delivering places, not just houses.

RTPI Scotland would be happy to meet with the Commission to discuss the role of planning in the housing and wellbeing debate, and to share experiences and expertise on these issues. I trust that you will find these comments helpful. If you would like to discuss any aspect, or require clarification of any points raised, please contact me on 0131 229 9628 or by email to craig.mclaren@rtpi.org.uk .

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in brown ink, appearing to read 'Craig McLaren', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Craig McLaren
Director