

SCOTLAND'S NATIONAL PLANNING FRAMEWORK 4 THINK PIECE – BLOG – PLACES FOR OLDER PEOPLE

Introduction

The Scottish Government is keen to bring together views and ideas from a wide range of sectors and to explore the priorities Scotland's fourth National Planning Framework (NPF4) should address.

In the sixth in a series of Think Pieces, Diana Findley, Chair of Scottish Older People's Assembly (SOPA), sets out her thoughts on Scotland2050 and specifically places for older people. The opinions expressed are that of the author and we hope that they will stimulate debate and discussion. Think Pieces will be published over the coming weeks.

The issues and opportunities

What are the current issues and opportunities for your area of interest?

Key issues that relate to older people and planning include ensuring the Scotland has:

- housing that is warm, secure, accessible and adaptable to enable older people to live independently and well as they age
- spaces that support active, healthy ageing, where older people can access community activities and services they need, interact with people of all ages, get about easily and enjoy spending time

Current issues include the lack of suitable and affordable housing, inaccessible spaces due to lack of transport, poorly designed public spaces and badly maintained pavements.

The issues are well documented in media reports and headlines such as Scotland's disabled housing shortage at 'crisis' point (Scotsman 11 May 2018) or Lack of homes suitable for older people fuels housing crisis (Guardian July 2019) are all too common.

What are the future issues and opportunities, looking ahead towards 2050?

Looking ahead to 2050, the ageing population, rising numbers of older people with housing and mobility needs and an increase in single person households, along with societal and policy shift to encourage people to live in their own homes for as long as possible, means that the current arrangements will not meet future demands.

How are these issues relevant to planning?

The issues are directly related to planning in terms of public realm design and the development of housing. The planning system needs to ensure that it works to support the needs of future populations.

Are the issues different in different parts of Scotland?

There are different issues in different parts of Scotland e.g. the issue of increasing student housing in cities with less focus on older people's housing, to issues of transport and access for rural communities.

Planning solutions

What are the factors over which the planning system has the most influence?

What might National Planning Framework 4 do to address these issues?

The Scottish Older People's Assembly is an associate member of the UK Network of Age-friendly Communities and through this has been able to visit and learn from positive examples of planning from other parts of the UK. Accessible design has come a long way from ugly handrails and cumbersome ramps, and some communities have designed beautiful spaces and buildings that are 'friendly' to all, irrespective of age or ability.

SOPA has also previously been involved in research such as work undertaken by the OPEN space centre at the Edinburgh College of Art. Three of our Members have also been involved with a University of Stirling project called A Good Life - in which one of the streams was Ageing and Housing - led by Dr. Vikki McCall.

The research and good practice examples relating to what is needed and how it can be achieved is readily available and we need to ensure that this learning is built into the future planning system at all levels.

Summary

*Short term (next 10 years) – what **will** happen?*

- The numbers of older people will increase and if no positive action is taken, the experience of older people living in inappropriate housing and unable to participate in communities due to lack of access and the condition of the environment will deteriorate.

*Long term – what **could** happen?*

- All planning decisions could be based on principles of age-friendly design and accessibility.

*Overall – what **should** happen?*

- All planning decisions should be based on principles of age-friendly design and accessibility – the research, evidence and good practice is readily available, it is incumbent that our systems use it! To build accommodation which is easy to adapt to meet the differing needs of Older, Disabled people allowing for wheelchairs and appropriate bathing facilities etc.

Biography

Diana Findley has been Chair of Scottish Older People's Assembly since 2018. Diana worked in business and hotel management. Since retirement, she's been

involved in Better Government for Older People, a Regional Ambassador for Age Scotland, chairperson of Borders Older People's Forum, and is on the Board of the Borders Social Enterprise Chamber.