

Young Planners NPF4 Roundtable 3 – Inequalities

11 August 2020

This event was organised as part of a wider engagement programme undertaken by RTPI Scotland and commissioned by the Scottish Government for the National Planning Framework 4 (NPF4). The four young planner roundtables aimed to engage planners in the first ten years of their career and enable them to provide new thinking and ideas for the new NPF.

Context

This session was based on inequalities and was 'kick-started' by Irene Beautyman to initiate creative thinking on the topic and challenge and expand the ideas from the young planners during the discussion. Craig McLaren provided an overview of important changes to the National Planning Framework format and content.

Kick-starter Introduction

- Scotland's record of health is the worst in the UK; there is a 25 year difference between two council areas in Scotland in terms of average life expectancy.
- Planning plays a role in changing the number of healthy life years that people in an area live. But it is one part of a whole system where different people and professions play different parts, so national policy to provide common ground is necessary. Planning itself must focus on prevention and wellbeing and identify local priorities.

Unit Flexibility

- Poverty is not just about having no money, it is about the level of control and access people have. The use of many main streets does not prioritise health and wellbeing. NPF4 needs to encourage social enterprises to set up in these main streets, providing options for communities. Town centres should be renamed community centres and include a mix of units that are affordable and accessible so that everyone can make healthy choices.
- Overarching objectives would be helpful – local authorities should be given power and flexibility through Scottish Planning Policy to implement what is relevant and important in their area.
- Place value would also have to be included in place standards so that communities found these spaces beneficial. Creating demand for healthy units is also something local authorities could work on.

Health Policy

- NPF4 could enforce all or just national/major planning applications to undertake health impact assessments or screenings. These would have to be done everywhere not just areas of high deprivation, but different approaches would be made for individual areas.
- NPF4 should take an area based regeneration approach, putting poverty into the mainstream of how things are done. This would aim to balance inequality, regional disparities, quality of place and jobs.

- Data should be shared between planning policy and health teams. NPF4 would play a role in enforcing stronger national connections in general between NHS and health & social care partnerships.
- The NHS has often proven hard to get a response from so there is an opportunity to create the role of a 'statutory consultee' to respond to big developments in planning. The NPF would produce a statement of who this is in order to establish a relationship.
- Local authorities should be given the option to prepare an annual report or strategy about health matters. This should be prepared in partnership with an NHS representative or a local authority sports provider. This would create better links with the health board.

Place Principle

- Embed the place principle and place standard in NPF4. This would target different groups and communities and engage them in the system. The place standard tool could be included in the early consultation stages of the local development plan and used to consult with community councils in facilitated discussions. It could also be included at application stage as a policy marker against developments. NPF4 needs to make sure the tool is backed up by data, evidence and recommendations and has solid numbers for robust results.

Housing

- NPF4 needs to be stronger on design and density. There are constraints on developers to implement local community choices. Design codes are an idea for badly designed areas – they give people a choice over housing and variety in new builds e.g. individual unique homes, self builds, small plots etc. These could also include bigger developments split into smaller sites so that density is achieved as well as bespoke, varied design. They could be a way to deliver housing in low demand and would be an incentive for developers to develop in that way. It also creates more choice specifically for people in different circumstances – accessible housing for disabled or aged people. The design codes should be simple and easy to understand.
- Scottish Planning Policy on housing currently contains very little on place. Therefore in NPF4, it needs to have the ability to refuse housing developments on climate change grounds. The principle policy or overarching theme of NPF4 should be that developments have regard for the place standard criteria and underneath as a continuing theme, the health policies associated with instilling it.
- NPF4 should take on the challenge of delivering homes in areas of need as well as demand. Social housing is generally high quality in developed in areas of need, so NPF4 needs to look to how the Government can intervene to support this further.
- Housing should be seen as a priority within NPF4, with alternative modes and options available including co-living, which provides more affordable housing without complete state intervention. It also provides homes that are adapted to individual social requirements.

Resilience

- Given that NPF4 is a long term plan for Scotland, it must be resilient. Public health must therefore be emphasised at the centre NPF4 to support resilience.
- NPF4 can be used to embed resilience across communities by creating clearly defined parameters that support local areas.
- Active transport should be given status as a national development in Scotland. This would include improving the network and existing infrastructure as well as separating sections for pedestrians, cyclists and cars. This development should be monitored to ensure it delivers and remains resilient.



• NPF4 should have a strong policy framework and give officers choice as to what is good, not just what is acceptable. It should be worded 'must' not 'should' to enforce change and delivery.

Big Ideas from roundtable:

- Town centres include a mix of units that are affordable and accessible so that everyone can make healthy choices.
- NPF4 should enforce national/major planning applications to undertake health impact assessments or screenings.
- NPF4 should take an area based regeneration approach, putting poverty into the mainstream of how things are done.
- Embed the place principle and place standard in NPF4.
- Housing should be seen as a priority within NPF4, with alternative modes and options available.
- Active transport should be given status as a national development in Scotland.