

ft' work

social design principles

ft'work

ft'work is a not-for-profit company with a strong ambition – to create thriving communities and to ensure that clear social principles underpin all new development. At a local level ft'work collaborates in generating fresh ideas and in identifying and supporting existing projects. This might include advice, financial support or helping them to evaluate what they do, so that the best ideas elsewhere can be rolled out elsewhere. ft'work campaigns at a national level to create a more socially aware built environment, by communicating the key elements of a successful community, as identified in research, and by influencing debate and policy.



Waterloo underpass, London. Photograph: Clare Richards

Introduction

How can we create communities when we build places?

With mounting pressure to build new homes, whole neighbourhoods and towns, economic interests are compromising good intentions and drowning out the need to create lively and diverse places with a sense of their own identity. This is a well-known issue, with a long and largely undistinguished history, yet it is not something that architects, or built-environment professionals in general, are trained to address.

The Mayor of London, in the draft *New London Plan*, spells out the challenge: to deliver “*a more socially integrated and sustainable city, where people have more say and growth brings the best out of existing places while providing new opportunities to communities*”. This acknowledges the fundamental importance of the social purpose of design and accepts that the design of places is in part a social science. To ignore this not only risks repeating the problems of the past, but also losing the battles of the present – gang-related knife crime and increasing homelessness are indeed relevant to future development and regeneration.

The extensive social aspirations within the draft New London Plan, although well-founded and increasingly recognised by politicians, planners and designers, they are not carried through into detailed policy or guidance. Until they are defined, given teeth and made enforceable, the Mayor’s challenge cannot be successfully delivered. It has therefore defined a set of six **social design principles**, with the aim that they be embedded within each stage of the planning process and given equal status with ‘spatial design principles’. Informed by the wealth of available research – ranging from the impact of health inequalities to the benefits of integration – they are a set of tools to aid the design, assessment and delivery of major development and regeneration projects.

Introduction cont.

In each case there is a description and suggestions for application. Where there exists a framework into which a principle could be added, or the potential for existing policy and guidance to work harder, it is indicated. The draft *New London Plan* highlights the role of 'initial evaluation' as a fundamental component in delivering good design (Policy D2), but does not suggest a mechanism. Understanding social context is essential, so we have identified how this might be achieved (with suggested new methods of assessment in **bold**). We have also suggested where meaningful scrutiny needs to be applied.

Health warning:

The adjective 'social' before any word conveys 'pertaining to people', but often disguises a clear meaning. When understood properly these terms can be very useful. A set of definitions is therefore included on page 31 and these terms are subsequently used in the way described within this document. With respect to 'social design principles' the word 'social' is used to make a distinction between design considerations that relate to people or society and those that relate to spatial matters.



Wyndham Estate, London. Architect: Colin Lucas (1964-1967);
Photograph: Iñigo Bujedo-Aguirre

1 principle one

Social needs must be identified and addressed as a precondition for development and regeneration

Description:

Whether building a new neighbourhood, or regenerating an existing one, to transform the built environment alone will not provide for people's needs. First there must be a thorough understanding of the social context and any existing problems, then specific steps identified to tackle them. Unless these social factors are addressed, built environment professionals cannot create the physical conditions that can help a community to thrive. To avoid repeating the mistakes of the past and to learn from what has worked, methods for measuring success must be developed and implemented.

The policy context is clear. In the NPPF 'a social role' is one of the 'three dimensions of sustainable development', described as *"supporting strong, vibrant and healthy communities, by providing the supply of housing required to meet the needs of present and future generations; and by creating a high quality built environment, with accessible local services that reflect the community's needs and support its health, social and cultural well-being"*. It further directs that local authorities must prepare Local Plans and Neighbourhood Plans that *"meet social needs"*.

principle 1 cont.

Assessment:

Methodology is already in place to assess local social needs:

- *Index for Multiple Deprivation* (the generally accepted measure)
- *Joint Strategic Needs Assessment* and *Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategies* (for health and wellbeing data)
- *Census* (for data on socio-demographics, e.g. economic activity and tenure distribution)
- *Healthwatch* (for local anecdotal data)

Application:

- Each borough to conduct a **Social Needs Assessment**, to be included in their *Development Plan* and *Local Plan* and detailed as a Supplementary Planning Document, which must include agreed benchmarks and be kept updated
- Local authorities, Clinical Commissioning Groups and other service providers to commit to address identified social needs, as a precondition for designating *Opportunity Areas*, *Local Areas for Regeneration* and *Strategic Areas for Regeneration*
- *Design Review Panels* to appraise proposals to address social needs and well-being as an agreed component of the quality of a design. (This should also form part of the Mayor of London's planned *Guidance on Design Reviews*)
- *Post-occupancy Surveys* (RIBA Plan of Work Stage 7) to be a contractual obligation for all major developments, at 1 and 5 years after full occupancy. This will be an invaluable reference point for Development Plans and should be obligatory



Finsbury Estate, London. Architect: Emberton, Franck & Tardew (1965);
Photograph: Clare Richards

2 principle two

Social infrastructure must be protected where it exists and provided for in all new development

Description:

The GLA defines social infrastructure as the “uses and activities which contribute to making an area more than just a place to live”. It has both a formal and informal component: ‘formal’ social infrastructure typically refers to amenities or services, much of it currently determined by negotiation between developers and planners; ‘informal’ social infrastructure is a product of community – the diverse social networks, representing common interests, that evolve and interact over time. Understanding its value is key to accessing local opinion and identifying needs, so as to deliver appropriate and targeted services. ‘Formal’ and ‘informal’ social infrastructure are interdependent and must both be facilitated to ensure inclusivity and equality of opportunity.

principle 2 cont.

Assessment:

Informal social infrastructure in existing communities is best identified from within, through local knowledge. Infrastructure planning must then take account of it.

- Each borough to conduct a ***Social Infrastructure Survey***, with local partners and accessing the range of social groups, including those considered hard to reach
- A *Social Infrastructure Needs Assessment* (as proposed in the draft *New London Plan*) to be undertaken in the light of these informal networks and of identified local need, to ensure that proposals for new infrastructure are carefully aligned with it

Application:

Social infrastructure can only support local diversity and inclusivity if taken into account at the earliest opportunity, not left to be negotiated between developers and planners

- The *Social Infrastructure Survey* to be a formal point of reference for *Neighbourhood Plans* and for consultation and planning
- Local Authorities to provide a *Social Infrastructure Needs Assessment* within their *Development Plan* and *Local Plan*
- *Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG)* on social infrastructure is being updated. The *Social Infrastructure Needs Assessment* to be a key component, referenced in all strategic and major development proposals. In turn these must specifically address local requirements and demonstrate how the infrastructure is to be delivered



Alexand Estate. Architect: Neave Brown (1972-1978)
Photograph: Iñigo Bujedo-Aguirre

3 principle three

For communities to be inclusive, integration must drive major planning decisions

Description:

Britain's cities are diverse, yet increasingly segregated and unequal. Social groups live parallel lives, so that the life expectancy of those living a few streets apart can differ by up to 25 years. Strong evidence suggests that the more integrated a community – culturally, economically and socially – the more likely its success; and the less integrated, the greater the disconnect between its inhabitants and the social and economic activity around it.

The need to address integration is well-accepted and applies to all development projects, yet good intentions are too often compromised by short-term interests or economic expediency. For this to change, all involved must understand the social make-up of well-integrated, inclusive communities and commit to addressing the factors that enhance or damage them.

The Draft New London Plan calls for a process of initial assessment and details specific policies to improve the integration on which social inclusion depends — from the mix and balance of land uses and affordable housing tenures to a greater variety of delivery options and the co-location of services and facilities. The challenge is to address the mix in anticipation and to ensure effective scrutiny.

principle 3 cont.

Assessment:

The methodology to assess social integration, and the barriers to it, is currently inadequate. In planning terms 'inclusivity' tends to be conflated with 'accessibility'. This needs to be broadened to encompass both the social and the physical/spatial aspects of inclusion. A baseline must then be established, against which policies to promote integration can be measured.

- *Census* (for demographic and integration data)
- *Joint Strategic Needs Assessment* and *Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategies* (for data on access to and take-up of services)
- Local Authorities to instigate a *Demographic Profile*, to provide baseline data on social and spatial integration, with specific local barriers to inclusion also identified
- Accessibility and social inclusion often overlap, so they should be assessed together wherever appropriate

Application:

- Each borough to prepare a *Demographic Profile*, as part of the evidence gathering that forms the basis of the Local Plan and Development Plan
- Demographic Profiles to be adopted as a prerequisite for designating *Opportunity Areas*, *Local Areas for Regeneration* and *Strategic Areas of Regeneration*
- Integration to be addressed as a standard part of RIBA Plan of Work Stage 0
- Require *Design and Access Statements* for all development proposals to detail measures to create or improve integration, referencing the Demographic Profile for the area
- Measures to address integration and inclusion (eg. tenure mix, proportion of social rent and affordable homes) to be made non-negotiable in the planning process
- Limit the use of 'exceptional circumstances', by restricting it to a percentage of applications
- Novation to be required on socially complex projects, to ensure the design team's continued involvement
- *Design Review Panels* to have a specific responsibility to address social inclusion and integration, against agreed criteria; also to be included in all guidance on Design Review



Bethnal Green, London; Photograph: Clare Richards

4 principle four

'Social heritage' must be assessed alongside 'built heritage' and afforded equal value and protection

Description:

'Social heritage' (or 'intangible cultural heritage' as enshrined in the *UN Convention on Human Rights*) describes the local identity and character that make each place unique. It is the product of time, generated from within or between diverse groups of people in response to their environment and giving them a shared sense of continuity. 'Social heritage' is often referred to as a 'sense of place' or 'local character' and is widely valued, but because it is intangible it is more difficult to define and to protect than 'built heritage'.

If it is to be identified and protected, the value of social heritage to all communities, not just conservation areas, must be formally acknowledged. This requires a commitment, within policy and in general, to understand existing character and context. The way to achieve this is through collaborating with local groups to benefit from their knowledge; to understand the value of the landmarks and institutions that create a powerful sense of local identity; and to commit to protecting them.

principle 4 cont.

Assessment:

'Built' heritage and 'social' heritage overlap, therefore they should be assessed together wherever appropriate

- Consider adopting the term 'cultural heritage', to include both 'social' and 'built' heritage (used by *ICOMOS* to encompass "all expressions of the ways of living developed by a community... including customs, practices, places, objects, artistic expressions and values")
- Instigate *Area Character Appraisals*, conducted by local partners to access knowledge held by social networks (a system initially devised by English Heritage)
- Alternatively, broaden and rename the existing *Conservation Area Character Appraisals* and *Management Plans* to encompass all areas and to include social heritage

Application:

- *NPPF* definition of 'sustainable development' to be amended to encompass social sustainability — *"our valuable natural, social and historical environment"*
- The term 'built heritage' to be replaced by 'social and built heritage' in all policy descriptions, including in the New London Plan; adopt the term 'social heritage assets' alongside 'heritage assets'
- Include the Area Character Appraisal as a formal component of a *Neighbourhood Plan*, *Local Plan* and *Development Plan*
- Include social heritage in the designation of *Local Areas for Regeneration* and *Strategic Areas for Regeneration*
- Award valued social assets protected status, through local listing; and similarly extend the use of ACVs (Assets of Community Value)
- Strengthen local planning protection for smaller industrial and cultural workspaces and buildings of particular community value, such as pubs
- Include social heritage in the Mayor of London's proposed *Cultural Infrastructure Plan*



Canning Town, London; Photograph: Clare Richards

5 principle five

Enshrine self-determination as a key component of a democratic planning and development process

Description:

Self-determination – the freedom for people to act or decide for themselves without pressure from others – is a basic human right and a human need. There is a clear correlation between the control people feel they have over their lives and their physical and mental well-being. This in turn produces social capital – the resources inherent in social groups that prompt mutual support and collective action. This is an important feature of a thriving community and a measure of its sense of identity, yet it is undervalued.

Collaboration is the means to enable self-determination and unlock social capital. The built environment professions must take a lead in acknowledging the collaborative nature of architectural endeavour and the clear social advantages this provides. The benefits to development and regeneration projects of harnessing people's ideas and wishes far outweigh any financial payback. A requirement to 'consult' must become a requirement to 'engage' — an immersive process, whereby the impetus comes from within and engages a significant proportion of a community in a genuinely collaborative way.

principle 5 cont.

Assessment:

Like social infrastructure, the degree of autonomy and social capital within existing communities is best identified from within, through local knowledge.

- *Joint Strategic Needs Assessment* and *Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategies* to include the need for self-determination and its benefits to individual and collective well-being
- *A Social Infrastructure Survey*, conducted by or with local partners, should include measures to determine the level of social capital and to identify local institutions who could be engaged in facilitating collaborative planning processes
- *A Social Infrastructure Needs Assessment* (as proposed in the draft New London Plan) to identify areas of low social engagement and steps to address this

Application:

- The requirement for 'consultation' to be replaced with 'engagement' to ensure the active involvement of local people in planning policies and decisions that will affect them, to include hard to reach groups
- Training in consultation, participation and collaboration techniques to be compulsory for built environment professionals, to include the sharing of examples of best practice

- In the place of self-referral, active local groups and institutions to be formally approached and engaged in the preparation of *Neighbourhood Plans* and in the consultation stages of *Local Plans* and *Development Plans*
- Each borough to indicate local levels of social capital, as identified in the *Social Infrastructure Survey*, within their *Development Plan* and *Local Plan*, along with clear measures to reach unrepresented groups
- *Development Plans* to identify sites and opportunities for community-led initiatives, including community ownership, community-led housing, co-housing and self-build
- Boroughs and other public bodies to adopt a 'local first' approach, to ensure that 'meanwhile' sites, redundant pubs, unused facilities and industrial spaces are offered first to local groups (including voluntary groups) for community use and local enterprise
- Boroughs to devise structures to support locally-grown initiatives, such as *Community Land Trusts* and *Assets of Community Value (ACT)*; also to increase local planning protection for such schemes
- The option of self-management, with appropriate training and support, to be offered in all housing schemes
- Require transparency in all planning processes, particularly in relation to public procurement, viability, and the use of exceptional circumstances



Holly Street Estate, London; Photograph: Clare Richards

6 principle six

Prevent the displacement of existing communities

Description:

Communities evolve over time, yet they can quickly and carelessly be destroyed. In thriving communities people stay put; continuity, stability and a sense of security increase the chances of maintaining and creating successful neighbourhoods. Equally a transient population and loss of cohesion are features of a failing community. Research has detailed this cycle of decline and recovery: the displacement, particularly of families, is a key destructive factor, while the ability to accommodate changes in people's circumstances, is an important stabilising influence.

The causes of displacement are both social and political, with housing benefit policy, estate regeneration and gentrification through redevelopment often blamed. Planning policy is intended to offer some protection, with targets for affordable housing and rights for social tenants and owner-occupiers, but in reality this is proving insufficient. For displacement to be prevented the voice of existing communities must be heard and their rights protected at every stage of development; while planning policies and housing targets must be properly enforced and not compromised through negotiation.

principle 6 cont.

Assessment:

- *Census* (for demographic data)
- The proposed *Demographic Profile* to provide data on the turnover within communities, which should be kept updated

Application:

- Data on turnover, via the Demographic Profile, to be included in the *Local Plan* and *Development Plan*
- Boroughs to commit to the phasing of redevelopment as a prerequisite for designating *Local Areas for Regeneration* and *Strategic Areas of Regeneration*
- To avoid displacement during redevelopment, rehousing in a single move to be made obligatory
- Boroughs to enforce rules regarding on-site provision of affordable housing, currently a major cause of gentrification; also fixed limits to be imposed on 'exceptional circumstances', whereby developers negotiate away their obligations, contrary to planning legislation

- A formal commitment for existing social tenants to be protected from uplift in rent, as a pre-requisite for estate regeneration; with owner-occupiers offered 'easy terms' to buy into the new development
- *Planning Committees* to have a specific responsibility to ensure the sufficient provision of replacement housing in redevelopment projects, informed by a Demographic Profile
- *Design Review Panels* to assume responsibility for scrutinising the provision of replacement housing in redevelopment projects; this also to be included in the Mayor of London's *Guidance on Design Review*

A note about education and training

In the drive to build 300,000 new homes a year (the last time this was achieved was in 1969-70), local and national government, backed by legislation, expect 'built environment occupations' to take a lead in creating "*cohesive communities in which people want to live, work and play*". This is a role that design professionals do not have the tools to deliver. Design can play an important part, but the development and procurement process must become more socially responsive and collaborative.

In order to close the gap between the designer and the user, professional training needs to acknowledge the social purpose of architecture and adopt a socially aware approach. Future built environment professionals must learn to understand how places work and how people relate to their physical and social environment, so that they can be effective in the process of shaping them.

The institutions at the forefront of design, delivery and quality control, must assume greater leadership in ensuring that social design principles have equal status with spatial design principles. This includes the *RIBA*, *Design Council* *CABE* and the *GLA*.

Definitions

'Social' (adjective)

The Oxford English Dictionary defines 'social' as 'relating to society or its organization'. This is the sense in which it is used in the terms below. It also means 'needing companionship and therefore best suited to living in communities'.

'Social needs'

The term became a widely accepted tenet of psychology thanks to a post war American humanist psychologist, Andrew Maslow. He defined a 'hierarchy of needs', a pyramid with 'physiological needs' at the bottom and 'self-actualization' (the need to fulfill potential) at the top. Although academics have argued about the order of importance, the elements he defined are now broadly covered by the term 'social needs': food, water, shelter, security (physical and economic); health and well-being; sense of belonging, need to form and maintain social connections (from family and friends to work associates and cultural groups); self-esteem, recognition and self-respect; self- fulfillment and self-motivation.

'Social fabric'

This is generally accepted to describe the demographics of an area, consisting of its wealth, ethnic composition, level of education, rate of employment and local values. It also suggests an implicit social covenant between individuals and society, including: acceptance and a sense of belonging to larger whole, fair treatment, mutual trust, recognition of the contributions individuals make to a community and the obligations members owe to each other.

'Social capital'

Harvard University defines social capital as 'those resources inherent in social relations which facilitate collective action... [These] include trust, norms and networks of association representing any group which gathers consistently for a common purpose. A norm of a culture high in social capital is reciprocity... and belief in the equality of citizens'. According to leading social scientist, Robert Putnam, social capital is a key component to building and maintaining democracy and is defined by "connections among individuals – social networks and the norms of reciprocity and trustworthiness that arise from them." It is widely accepted that, through collective action and collaboration, social capital can be harnessed for the benefit of a community by its own members and outside agencies.

'Social heritage'

Social heritage (or 'intangible heritage' as it is enshrined in the UN Convention on Human Rights) is a product of time, generated from within or between groups of people and often passed from one generation to another. Practices evolve in response to their environments and they contribute to giving people a sense of identity and continuity, providing a link with the past, through the present, and into the future. Social heritage is inclusive, representing not just inherited traditions but also contemporary practices in which diverse cultural groups take part. It is community-based, depending on local knowledge being passed on to the rest of the community, and might only be recognised as having value by the groups or individuals that create and maintain it.

'Community'

Community is both a feeling and a set of relationships among people, maintained to meet common needs. Members of a community have a sense of mutual trust and belonging, an awareness that they can influence their environments and each other. This evolves over time, from shared experiences and a sense of shared history and is fundamental to human experience. Every community is organized to meet its members' needs, but they operate differently based on the cultures, religions, and other experiences of their members.

Communities often sit within other communities. In a neighbourhood community there may be ethnic or racial communities, communities based on age group, on common needs or on economic interests. Communities also form institutions (companies, schools, charities, places of worship etc.), to more effectively fulfil their needs. Equally important are informal institutions, such as social networks. Lower-income and immigrant communities, in particular, rely heavily on these.

Most people participate in multiple communities. For instance the residential neighbourhood remains essential for single mothers and the elderly, as the basis for the support they need; while for others, online communities play a much greater role.