



DECADE: Housing

I don't live in a house, I live in a community

Scotland has a focus to deliver better outcomes, address fairness and equality, empower citizen engagement and participatory processes, manage public service delivery in a time of constrained finances and create opportunity for all through a flourishing society. The big challenges of the day point to 'new ways of doing' with public, private and third-sector partnerships uniting across different agendas to make a tangible difference to people's lives. The delivery of housing and infrastructure is an integral part of enabling positive change.

Over the past decade, a housing story mostly rooted in numbers (for example, build rates and need-versus-demand analysis) has become increasingly wider ranging and inclusive. The emphasis has shifted from 'house' to 'home', stronger links between housing and wellbeing have been recognised and it's now understood that single land use zonings hinder the creation of vibrant communities.

Important though the considerations are, it is no longer sufficient to narrowly describe housing provision in terms of providing 'a roof over the head' or delivering target numbers. Housing provision is now more correctly understood to represent a long-term place investment that supports broader aims and life chances, for example, better health and wellbeing, social cohesion and a reduction in the segregation between the poor and better off. And these strong themes were apparent in the DECADE presentations and discussion.

Along with NHS Scotland and the Scottish Government, A&DS has been developing the Place Standard which is

helping to develop and promote this understanding and inform practical action.

Scotland today faces challenge and change. Housing has an important role in supporting the progression towards a wealthier, fairer country. Investment in housing is essential, but this is no longer about delivering mere unit value; it is key to building place value that supports better lives and stronger communities.

Eric Dawson, A&DS

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The Place Standard

by Rory Mitchell, Health Scotland

What is the purpose of a Place Standard?

The purpose of the Place Standard is to support the delivery of high quality places in Scotland and to maximise the potential of the physical and social environment in supporting health, wellbeing and a high quality of life. It will do this by articulating what makes a good, sustainable place, and by setting a framework for processes which deliver places of high quality.

Why are we developing one?

The environment that surrounds us has substantial influence over our health and wellbeing, and is part of the causal chain that leads to health inequalities. In recognition of the opportunities for action that this affords, Good Places Better Health (an initiative launched in 2008 as the Scottish Government's strategy on health and the environment) recommended a Scottish Neighbourhood Quality Standard.

In June 2013, the Scottish Government policy statement 'Creating Places' called for the development of a Place Standard to deliver quality, sustainable places across Scotland. These parallel work streams and complementary goals were recognised and organised into a single project to create a Place Standard for Scotland.

What is it?

At its core, the Place Standard is an assessment tool that involves bringing people together to evaluate the strengths and challenges that exist in a particular place, as a catalyst for action. It is underpinned by 14 themes

that cover both the physical and social aspects of place that affect health and wellbeing.

What will it do?

- Deliver a framework for the assessment and improvement of new and existing places.
- Provide a framework for structured conversations, supporting public and private sectors and communities to work together to deliver high quality places.
- Maximise the contribution of place to reducing health inequalities across Scotland.
- Support strategic decision-making that influences liveability, quality of life and access to services.

What's been happening?

The project is being developed by a partnership between Scottish Government Architecture and Place, NHS Health Scotland, and Architecture and Design Scotland. During 2015, there has been wide consultation with stakeholders, and piloting has furthered understanding of how the Place Standard can positively impact upon processes that affect the way we create, improve or invest in places throughout Scotland.

What's happening next?

The Place Standard will be launched in December 2015. The focus will then shift to ensuring that it achieves the impact necessary to meet the aims of delivering high quality places, improving health and wellbeing, and reducing health inequalities. The implementation of the

Place Standard provides a real challenge, and will build on the principles of developing case studies and sharing learning. Users and stakeholders have a key role to play. To date, there has been a lot of interest in the Place Standard; we need to ensure that its potential is matched by its impact.

About the author:

RORY MITCHELL joined NHS Health Scotland in 2008 as part of the Public Health Observatory team. His current role as Good Places Better Health Information Strategy Leader focuses on place and health, and he is currently leading Health Scotland's input to the development of the Place Standard.

Continuing the tradition of great placemaking

by Kevin McGeough, Homes and Communities Agency

Scotland and the UK have some of the best examples of placemaking in the world, such as New Lanark, Edinburgh New Town, Saltaire and Bath which are listed as UNESCO World Heritage sites. This status elevates each of these completely planned neighbourhoods and cities to represent the high points of planning and urban design delivery from the past 250 years, and recognises their influence on city planning internationally over that period. Furthermore, these places are consistently rated high in Quality of Life surveys and are among the most valuable real estate in their respective locations.

However, Scotland and the UK have also planned and delivered some of the worst new communities of the past century, including new towns such as Cumbernauld, Glenrothes, Skelmersdale and Craigavon (Northern Ireland) which are often included in 'Crap Towns' publications, and are among the cheapest and least attractive places in the UK to live.

Architecture and Design Scotland is seeing an unprecedented number of schemes coming through the Design Forum on a neighbourhood scale, offering exciting opportunities for future new communities.

Great placemaking is not subjective. The principles behind it, and the processes required to deliver them, are tried and tested. We don't need to reinvent the wheel when planning future new communities – instead, we need to understand and follow these principles and processes in order to learn from the best and avoid the worst outcomes of the past.

A good resource for understanding these principles and processes is the Urban Design Compendium 1 and 2.

This includes a summary table which illustrates that, while various publications including Creating Places use different terminology, in essence they are all saying the same thing.

Central to creating sustainable new communities and neighbourhoods is ensuring that they are designed for everyone at every stage of their lives – 'Lifetime Neighbourhoods' – and that they are designed to be lived in and vibrant.

We are never designing in a vacuum, therefore we should always be aware of good local, national and international contemporary examples that we can learn from. The Western Harbour development in Malmö, Sweden is an excellent example as it sits on a similar line of latitude to Glasgow and Edinburgh and has successfully reinvented a derelict dockland area.

To deliver successful places like Malmö or our historic precedents, we should follow the processes of delivery as outlined in Urban Design Compendium 2. If we skip any of the stages, we are unlikely to create successful and sustainable communities.

The process of great placemaking:

- Sowing the seed – setting policy
- Integrated design – designing collaboratively
- Delivering quality and adding value – getting the right partners and delivery approach
- Vision to reality – monitoring planning and technical delivery on the ground
- Managing the place – ensuring a long-term legacy

For each stage of delivery, there are excellent examples in Scotland, the UK and Europe that we can learn from to secure sustainable new communities for the future. Following these simple principles and processes will deliver more UNESCO World Heritage sites and fewer 'Crap Towns'.

About the author:

KEVIN MCGEOUGH is Head of Corporate Strategy at the Homes and Communities Agency, England, where he supports the executive team to meet the future housing needs of all communities and generations across both the public and private sector. He is an architect and urban designer.

Places and palaces – planning policies vs. people’s expectations

by Mark Hamilton, Springfield

My role at Springfield Properties has provided us with the opportunity to influence house-building design, with the aim of changing the (on the whole) negative perception that people have of volume house building. However, from a design, quality and place perspective, seeking to positively change volume house building is like turning an oil tanker.

Eat, sleep, rave, repeat

Volume house building in Scotland is ‘a bit average’ at best and place is a word which simply doesn’t feature in the formulae employed by most large-scale house builders. ‘Designing Streets’ is often just a hurdle to jump. Many promise the earth but don’t deliver, instead potato-stamping standard boxes all over the country.

There are now examples of almost every architectural ‘style’ in Scotland. Unfortunately, few of these are driven by quality, people, place, or even by being located in Scotland. Most of the work is mediocre and it tends to be formulaic, shaped only by square footage, material costs, availability, land cost, repetition and protecting margin – unit volume is what it’s all about.

However, at Springfield, we base our approach around the principle that ‘everyone’s different’, and so is every place. By giving clients the control to design the layout of their dwelling to suit their own lifestyle, we can avoid the formulaic approach to house building. In our experience, allowing people to influence and shape their internal environment works, so it leads us to wonder – could that principle be applied in some way to placemaking?

‘We can’t sell roads!’

In volume house building, there is an obsession with the individual’s space, at the expense of the community dialogue. There is no opportunity to look at how the individual (or family) contributes to a community and to the ‘value’ of a place. Little effort is made to look beyond the shell of the house to the external environment, the public realm and the street. It is virtually impossible to get surveyors to recognise the value of good design, and the designed spaces between houses, over and above ‘location, location, location’.

Design integrity has to be one aspiration, fashion led or otherwise. As designers, we have to offer everything that the volume house builder purports to provide, and more. And we have to do it in smarter way – working within the tight parameters of square-foot build cost and accommodation provided, but perhaps providing flexibility to enable a family ‘house for life’ etc.

There is a shortage of housing and land supply for housing in Scotland; however, surely we must limit the amount of mediocrity that gets through the system? Anything goes these days, and it’s not good enough.

Suggestions going forward:

- Clearer guidelines to local authorities under the Scottish Government’s direction.
- Consistency across local authorities, but recognition of local values and relevant historical contexts/ differences.
- Support of entrepreneurs, ideas and big thinking.

- Future flexibility in master planning and policy.
- More choice for the public, and house typologies which fit and can adapt as families expand and contract – a house for life within communities that can thrive.

About the author:

MARK HAMILTON is Head of Architectural Design at Springfield, covering the north and central offices delivering a diverse range of projects across the country. He is an architect who graduated from the University of Strathclyde in 1996. He was previously Associate Director Architect with ZM Architecture.

Connection, independence and being at home in a place ... we want it all!

by Yvette Burgess, Housing Support Enabling Unit

The contribution that housing and the environment more generally have on a person’s health and wellbeing is becoming better understood, and the integration of health and social care provides an opportunity to pursue better ‘placemaking’.

Feeling at home in a place is fundamental to wellbeing and requires finding a balance between living independently and connecting with others outside our home. How we use the wider physical space and services in an area can be fundamental to achieving such a balance. For those with support needs or those going through a period of transition after bereavement, homelessness, leaving care, loss of physical ability or illness, there may be particular challenges in achieving this sort of balance.

The way a person thinks about the place where they live may be affected by how they came to live there and how long they expect to live there. Did they choose to live in the area or do they feel they were ‘placed’ there?

Over the last 15 years, we have pursued social policies focused on reducing institutional care for people with learning disabilities (The same as you? strategy) and older people (Reshaping Care for Older People strategy). Long-stay learning disability hospitals have been closed and the number of geriatric hospital beds has reduced drastically over the last ten years.

When we consider the design of the communities where we live, those with support needs must be taken into account to avoid, or deal with, the risk of isolation. We know that inaccessible facilities and inadequate public transport can be significant barriers for people with disabilities, particularly in rural areas.

Housing support services have long recognised the importance of helping people to make and/or retain social connections and find ways of contributing to community life. Housing associations have an important role in delivering housing support services as well as promoting community initiatives more generally.

The Place Standard tool being developed relates well to formal housing support services which seek, at an individual level, to support people living in the community. Most themes within the Place Standard tool can be grouped within the five headings used in the Better Futures outcomes tool (accommodation, health, safety and security, social and economic wellbeing, employment and meaningful activity), which is used by some housing support services.

The sorts of discussions that take place at an individual level about these issues could offer useful insights for designers of the places where we live. Additionally, discussion about the themes associated with the Place Standard, may help individuals to reflect objectively about their relationship with the people, spaces and services in the area where they live.

About the author:

YVETTE BURGESS has worked in supported housing across the south west of England and set up The Access Point, a health, housing and social work service for rough sleepers in Edinburgh. Since 2004, Yvette has led the Housing Support Enabling Unit to assist providers of housing support across Scotland.

Mixed communities: looking back

by Keith Kintrea, University of Glasgow

In the 2000s, there was an upsurge in the idea that developing mixed communities could be beneficial to society as a whole as well as to community members. Powerful ideas from political science and urban sociology suggested that 'bridging social capital', derived from diversified social networks, could help people 'get on', reconnecting residents into 'mainstream society'.

The Scottish Government, building on the established concept of tenure diversification, strong within 1990s' housing policy, arrived at 'social mix' as a policy prescription. By the mid-2000s, all the main housing, planning and regeneration policy statements talked about creating 'mixed communities'.

The idea was an important one. Conventional area-based initiatives were showing their limitations. Poor places were physically improved but appeared locked into circuits of poor health, unemployment and low educational achievement. Social mix promised a social fix.

Ten years on and this idea has decayed. Look hard at policy statements now and it's still there, but fading away. There have been some important 'mixed-income new developments' created, although all the successful ones in Scotland have been directly leveraged by the public sector, and are few in number.

Most large council-built estates have become more diverse, mainly through Right to Buy and low-cost home ownership. However, the social distance between buyers and renters in the same neighbourhoods is often narrow, and private renting is starting to supplant home ownership in many estates as the market changes.

In most of Scotland, though, there was little change. It probably didn't help that the social theory that underpinned mixed communities was also complex and contestable, and that research produced mixed messages about its benefits. But a key problem was that policy wasn't ready to take on the forces leading to the lack of mix in the first place. International evidence suggests that poor and better-off groups in western societies are becoming increasingly spatially segregated, and that is also likely to be so in Scotland.

In particular, social housing continues its strong focus on needs and, therefore, concentrates poverty, while new social housing – supported by public investment – mainly gets built in places that are already poor (and being made even poorer by welfare reform). The planning system can do very little to promote social mix in new developments. So most developer-led schemes (the majority of new housing in Scotland) were and remain unmixed.

Even considered generously, social-mix policy this last decade has been an uneven success. But perhaps it was naïve to have thought that it could prevail. Even if the evidence of the benefits of social mix was unambiguous, it's difficult for policy to mount a challenge to the pervasive sorting effects of residential choice processes in a marketised housing system without huge amounts of public spending. In most circumstances, the market obstructs the possibilities of building new houses for low-income people in rich places and vice versa.

Overall, preferences and constraints are likely to continue to shape residential areas in Scotland along social class and income lines. And housing needs,

rather than social geography, will continue to inform the majority of public sector housing investment, especially in straitened times.

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– Keith Kintrea, University of Glasgow

About the author:

KEITH KINTREA is Professor of Urban Studies and Housing at the University of Glasgow. He has published on a wide variety of themes concerning housing, communities, inequalities, regeneration and young people. He is currently working on a study of educational disadvantage and place in Scotland.