



**RTPI  
Briefing  
Paper**

**MARCH 2021**

# **20 MINUTE NEIGHBOURHOODS**

**Implementing 20 minute  
neighbourhoods in planning  
policy and practice**

[rtpi.org.uk](http://rtpi.org.uk)

Registered charity number: 262865  
Scottish registered charity number: SC 037841

# Contents

<b>Contents</b> .....	<b>2</b>
<b>Executive summary</b> .....	<b>3</b>
<b>1. Introduction</b> .....	<b>4</b>
<b>2. Embedding in planning policy</b> .....	<b>5</b>
National Planning Framework 4 .....	5
Creating Places and Designing Streets Policy Statements .....	5
Data .....	6
Density .....	7
Transport.....	7
Local Services.....	8
Open Space Strategies .....	9
<b>3. Development Management</b> .....	<b>9</b>
Pre-application process.....	9
Planning obligations .....	10
Outcomes-focused performance measures .....	10
<b>4. Place-based partnerships</b> .....	<b>11</b>
Place Principle .....	11
Local Place Plans.....	12

# Executive summary

The Covid-19 pandemic has had an immediate, and likely a lasting effect, on how we use towns and cities to live, work and play in. 20 minute neighbourhoods are a concept of urban development that has ascended rapidly in the minds of policymakers, politicians and the general public across the world. The basic premise is a model of urban development that creates neighbourhoods where daily services can be accessed within a 20 minute walk. This briefing paper focuses on the role planning policy and practice and place-based partnerships can have in delivering the concept in Scotland. This report recommends a range of areas of planning policy, development management and public service delivery which could be adjusted to include interventions to support 20 minute neighbourhoods. The on-going planning reform in Scotland, including the implementation of the Planning (Scotland) Act 2019 through drafting of the National Planning Framework 4 (NPF4), secondary legislation and guidance, provides an excellent opportunity to do so.

Policy and guidance opportunity areas identified:

- NPF4 and LDP policies including transport, density, services and green infrastructure
- Designing Streets policy statement
- Creating Places policy statement
- Open Space Strategies
- Woodland and Forestry Strategies.
- Play sufficiency assessments
- Digital Planning Strategy

Development management procedures identified:

- Pre-application process
- Planning obligations
- Outcome focused performance measures

The briefing concludes with a discussion on the role of place-based partnerships, focusing in particular on the role for the Place Principle and Local Place Plans in supporting delivery of 20 minute neighbourhoods.

# 1. Introduction

The Covid-19 pandemic has had a profound and lasting impact across the world. Responding to this unprecedented shock to the social and economic system, the Royal Town Planning Institute sets out in its 'Plan The World We Need' campaign, the vital contribution that planning can make toward to a sustainable, resilient and inclusive recovery. This includes an accelerated progress to a zero carbon economy, increase resilience to risk, and create fair, healthy and prosperous communities<sup>1</sup>. A planning concept and urban growth model known as the 20 minute neighbourhood, has gained significant traction across the world as a means of supporting this recovery, spurred on in part by the outcomes of the Covid-19 pandemic. In Scotland, 20 minute neighbourhoods have made their way into policy and political spheres with inclusion within the Programme for Government 2020-21 and explicit mention in the recently published National Planning Framework 4 Position Statement. Whilst their definition is not universally agreed upon, the basic premise is a model of urban development that creates neighbourhoods where daily services can be accessed within a 20 minute walk. The aim of such neighbourhoods is to regenerate urban centres, enhance social cohesion, improving health outcomes and support the move towards carbon net-zero targets through reducing unsustainable travel.

An array of interventions need considering to support the implementation of 20 minute neighbourhoods including active travel interventions, public realm and greenspace enhancements, traffic reduction methods, service provision and considerations of densification. Whilst 20 minute neighbourhood type interventions are recent in their deployment, there is a growing body of evidence supporting such interventions. Analysis of the impacts of active travel and traffic calming interventions in Outer London during 2016-19 have shown a modal shift away from private vehicles<sup>2</sup>, reducing air pollution<sup>3</sup>, improved health outcomes<sup>4</sup> and reduced street crime<sup>5</sup>. Furthermore studies have also shown that residents who spend less time traveling by car generally spend more time engaging in community activities, enhancing social cohesion<sup>6</sup>. 20 minute neighbourhoods could also improve our approach to inclusive design with, for example, research showing that women tend to overall drive less and rely to a greater degree on public transport and walking compared to men<sup>7</sup>.

The fundamental tenets of 20 minute neighbourhoods are not necessarily new concepts in planning, with many already widely embedded in theory, policy and practice. This includes in a rural context, where settlement hierarchies already play an important role in allocating development in well-served settlements, alongside a general policy steer away from individual developments in isolated areas. With the renewed political and societal focus on neighbourhoods resulting from the Covid-19 pandemic, an opportunity has been provided for planning to reposition itself as a proactive and visionary discipline which will be critical in supporting post-COVID recovery and reinventing our places. The aim of this piece of work is not to try and provide a definition for 20 minute neighbourhoods or to discuss their evolution in policy and research but instead to focus thinking towards delivering their ambitions and how the planning system can

---

<sup>1</sup> RTPI (2020) Plan The World We Need. June. Available here: <http://bit.ly/2OvMyaf>

<sup>2</sup> Aldred, R and Goodman, A (2020) Low Traffic Neighbourhoods, Car Use, and Active Travel: Evidence from the People and Places Survey of Outer London Active Travel Interventions. Transport Findings. September. Available here: <https://bit.ly/38maKTn>

<sup>3</sup> Dajnak, D et al. (2018) Air Quality: concentrations, exposure and attitudes in Waltham Forest .July. Available here: <https://bit.ly/3sWUjoo>

<sup>4</sup> Dajnak, D and Walton, H (2018) Waltham Forest study of life expectancy benefits of increased physical activity from walking and cycling. September. Available here: <http://bit.ly/3enFw1Z>

<sup>5</sup> Goodman, A, and Aldred R. (2021) The Impact of Introducing a Low Traffic Neighbourhood on Street Crime, in Waltham Forest, London. February. Available here: <http://bit.ly/3s0wLyP>

<sup>6</sup> Morris, E et al. (2020) Which activities do those with long commutes forego, and should we care? Transportation Research Interdisciplinary Perspectives. May. Available here: <https://bit.ly/3sY2nVZ>

<sup>7</sup> Criado-Perez (2019) Invisible Women: Exposing Data Bias in a World Designed for Men

support this. The implementation of 20 minute neighbourhoods will require a multifaceted approach across planning policy and practice, and the collaborative working across the public and private sector. Therefore this briefing will address a range of areas where approaches can be changed, set under three key thematic areas of consideration as follows:

- Embedding 20 minute neighbourhoods in planning policy
- Addressing 20 minute neighbourhood in development management
- Place-based partnership delivery

## 2. Embedding in planning policy

As previously mentioned the aim of this briefing is not to discuss the definition of 20 minute neighbourhoods, with this been well addressed elsewhere<sup>8</sup>. However, it is acknowledged that in order to ensure the success of the concept a clear, holistic definition or vision needs embedding in policy. In Scotland a clear opportunity to do this lies in the impending draft of the National Planning Framework 4 and through the publication of a revised 'Designing Streets'<sup>9</sup> and 'Creating Places'<sup>10</sup> policy statement. A definition within national policy needs to be specific to provide confidence for decision makers but also a degree of flexibility to allow its application across a range of places with different context for examples across urban and rural areas.

### National Planning Framework 4

Research on the adoption of Scottish Planning Policy (SPP) in Local Development Plans (LDPs) recommended greater emphasis on placemaking at the forefront of development. It recognised a need for more direction in ensuring principles are implemented with planning policy becoming more prescriptive to ensure that placemaking principles are carried through to development management<sup>11</sup>. RTPI Scotland recommends that any enhanced emphasis on placemaking in policy strongly integrates the fundamental principles behind 20 minute neighbourhoods. To achieve this NPF4 should give clarity on the features of a 20-minute neighbourhood to ensure a consistent place-based approach to their delivery. A strong policy steer will provide planning officers and elected members the confidence to ensure that developments show strong placemaking principles and are in keeping with 20 minute neighbourhood initiatives and to have confidence that any refusals will be upheld in the event of an appeal. Specific areas of policy which can be reformed to support 20 minute neighbourhoods will be addressed in this section of the briefing. Furthermore the NPF4 provides an opportunity to start embedding at a policy level, a broader place-based approach in the delivery of public service, a theme which is addressed further on this briefing.

### Creating Places and Designing Streets Policy Statements

Creating Places is a policy statement on architecture and place for Scotland, setting out the

---

<sup>8</sup> Improvement Service (2021) 20 Minute Neighbourhoods, Elected Member Briefing Note. January. Available here: <https://bit.ly/3bw62Da>

<sup>9</sup> Scottish Government (2010) Designing Streets: A Policy Statement for Scotland. March. Available here: <http://bit.ly/3IHXCNJ>

<sup>10</sup> Scottish Government (2013) Creating Places: A policy statement on architecture and place for Scotland. June. Available here: <http://bit.ly/3fjEMf1>

<sup>11</sup> Scottish Government (2019) Adoption of Scottish planning policy in local development plans: research. October. Available here: <https://bit.ly/3kZUw7L>

comprehensive value that good design can deliver<sup>12</sup>. The statement sets out guiding principles which underpin the Scottish Government's approach to delivering good places. These principles are expressed as the six qualities proposed of successful places as distinctive, safe and pleasant, easy to move around, welcoming, adaptable and resource efficient. The policy statement does aim to support the creation of walkable neighbourhoods however a refreshed version could highlight the value of the 20 minute neighbourhoods and focus on design considerations necessary to create them. This includes more emphasis on the connectivity of developments in terms of active transport and the provision of accessible daily services for local people.

Designing Streets is a policy statement setting out national planning, architecture and transport policy for street design. It provides guidance on how to achieve a design-led approach to street design<sup>13</sup>. The document provides a basis for local and site-specific policy and guidance. It advocates an approach which is underpinned by also consideration of the six qualities of successful places set out in the Creating Places guidance. Designing Streets was published in 2010 and, given the new context for design post-COVID, there is a need to review its fitness for purpose and in doing so ensure that it better incorporates the fundamental tenets of 20 minute neighbourhoods. This is an intention already signalled by Scottish Government in their National Planning Framework 4 Position Statement<sup>14</sup>. Specific changes to approaches to active travel will be discussed later in the briefing.

## Data

LDPs set out policies and proposals to guide development, reflecting the unique characteristics of the places and communities they cover. Preparation of LDP strategies and policies needs to be informed by a robust and up-to-date evidence base. Therefore in order to support the formation of policy and delivery of 20 minute neighbourhoods, clear consideration needs to be made as to collection, analysis and visualisation of data relevant to achieve their output. To achieve this RTPI Scotland sees a role for the Scottish Government's Digital Planning Strategy. This Strategy aims to unlock the value of planning data, deliver an end-to-end digital planning service experience, create the conditions for digital to flourish, use digital tools to drive collaboration and engagement and embed a culture of digital innovation<sup>15</sup>. Mission 1 of the strategy is to unlock the value of planning data which has a number of goals to be delivered by 2025, including to:

- develop a shared data resource for planning and place data, built upon a cloud hosted platform that allows easy access to high quality data across Scotland.
- build a foundation of data that is robust, trusted and can be exchanged and used across geographic boundaries, vertically (across geographic scales), and which combines data from many policy areas (such as climate, people, work, place and infrastructure) that facilitates the place-based approach.
- embed a data-driven policy approach where development of policies considers data needs and opportunities at the earliest point, supporting planning policy by continuous monitoring of impact and iterative improvement.
- develop a Realising Potential programme to explore data-driven innovations within planning such as scenario modelling and simulation of future policy impacts.

---

<sup>12</sup> Scottish Government (2013) Creating Places: A policy statement on architecture and place for Scotland. June. Available here: <https://bit.ly/2N0n6cu>

<sup>13</sup> Scottish Government (2010) Designing Streets: A Policy Statement for Scotland. March. Available here: <https://bit.ly/3binnRi>

<sup>14</sup> Scottish Government (2020) Fourth National Planning Framework: position statement. November. Available here: <https://bit.ly/38185cG>

<sup>15</sup> Scottish Government (2020) Transforming Places Together: digital strategy for planning. November. Available here: <https://bit.ly/2OBWVcj>

Research by RTPI Scotland has shown large potential economic and societal benefits arising from this digital transformation<sup>16</sup>. For policy initiatives such as 20 minute neighbourhoods there is a need to provide a relevant, transparent and robust evidence base and indicators for monitoring purposes, which are continuously kept up to date. There are a range of existing tools and databases which could support this including the Place Standard Tool and Understanding Scotland's Places database.

With a strong national policy steer and a robust evidence base, local circumstances can be addressed through the preparations of Local Development Plans (LDPs). The following section will address thematic areas of LDP policy development:

- Density
- Transport
- Local Services
- Open Space Strategies

## Density

Compact settlement patterns help to reduce the distances between homes and jobs and makes more efficient use of existing transport infrastructure. Research has shown that larger settlements with higher densities can provide a critical mass of population to support local services, improve economic productivity, reduced transport emissions, better public health, and greater social interaction<sup>17</sup>. Higher densities manifest as taller buildings or terraced housing may reduce overall land take on schemes, allowing for enhanced blue and green infrastructure. It is estimated that to support 20 minute neighbourhoods an average density of at least 65 dwellings per hectare in new developments may be required, although it could be higher in some areas<sup>18</sup>. A stronger policy line in terms of density will be necessary to add more weight in the planning balance to the consideration of compact settlement form as opposed to existing local impact or landscape impact. This may include readdressing existing low density neighbourhoods. Policy support needs to be continued for intensification of settlements especially through promotion of use of brownfield land. Other policies measures such as reduction in minimum parking standards will enhance opportunities to achieve gentle density and better quality placemaking.

## Transport

A key policy tool in delivering 20 minute neighbourhoods is through better integrating transport and land use planning. The planning system has an important role to play in delivering active travel networks, reducing congestion and thereby creating liveable streets<sup>19</sup>. Despite a strong policy steer and a clear transport hierarchy prioritising active travel, uptake of active travel has stagnated in recent years in Scotland<sup>20</sup> with car traffic has increasing. Transport is also the largest single contributor to Scotland's carbon emissions with private cars accounting for 39% of overall transport emissions in 2018<sup>21</sup>. Car-centric design can have implications on ease of access to employment, services and facilities, which are not always located a convenient walking, cycling or public transport distance from residential neighbourhoods. In addition, with priority given to vehicle movement and access, less attention has been paid to the place function of streets and human

---

<sup>16</sup> RTPI Scotland (2020) Transforming Planning, Places and Scotland - The benefits of investing in a digital planning service. November. Available here: <https://bit.ly/3bgyDgW>

<sup>17</sup> RTPI (2018) Settlement Patterns, Urban Form and Sustainability. May. Available here: <https://bit.ly/3srnL5B>

<sup>18</sup> Improvement Service (2020) Comparing the 20 Minute Neighbourhood and Traditional Scenarios in Edinburgh Local Development Plan: a Rapid Scoping Assessment. September. Available here: <https://bit.ly/2P1cqL9>

<sup>19</sup> RTPI (2021) Net Zero Transport: the role of spatial planning and place-based solutions. January. Available here: <http://bit.ly/2OvBPfN>

<sup>20</sup> <https://nationalperformance.gov.scot/chart/journeys-active-travel>

<sup>21</sup> Transport Scotland (2020) Scottish Transport Statistics No. 39 2020 edition. Available here: <https://bit.ly/2On8LqM>

movement through them. This has resulted in, for example, narrow footpaths, inadequate street lighting and fragmented cycle lanes.

From a development planning perspective Transport Appraisals are an important tool to assess the impact of LDP strategies on transport networks and identifying locations where transport interventions are necessary. Transport Appraisals are undertaken in line with the Development Planning and Management Transport Appraisal Guidance (DPMTAG)<sup>22</sup>. The DPMTAG has a clear steer within it for promoting active travel modes, including through the production of Active Travel Plans. However the implementation of national policy and guidance is not resulting in shift in travel modes on the ground. RTPI Scotland would recommend an evidence based review of the DPMTAG in advance of the producing updated guidance. A move towards a tighter consideration of 20 minute neighbourhoods in Transport Appraisals may support local transport interventions to encourage active travel for local journeys.

The need to move active travel considerations from policy through guidance to delivery is a key concern in supporting 20 minute neighbourhoods. A refreshed 'Designing streets' provides another opportunity to do so. Designing Streets intends to steer street design towards place-making and away from a system focused upon the dominance of motor vehicles. However the consideration of active travel infrastructure is now outdated with the inclusion of wording such as "*Only where traffic volumes and speeds are high should the need for a cycle lane be considered.*" A refreshed 'Designing Streets' needs to better emphasise the importance of active travel when considering street design including the consideration of strategic active travel networks and core paths. An updating Designing Streets should incorporate updated guidance on active travel including a refreshed Cycling by Design and a new National Walking design standards. Local street design guidance can be subsequently produced to reflect local character.

As discussed above in recent years in Scotland there has been a significant increase in traffic volumes<sup>7</sup>. This increase in traffic has not been experienced equally across roads in urban areas with studies in England showing the greatest increase in volumes on since 1994 has been almost entirely on minor roads resulting in a greater noise, air pollution and road danger on residential streets<sup>23</sup>. A response to this in recent years has been the deployment of low-traffic neighbourhoods (LTNs)<sup>24</sup>. LTNs operate whereby private motorised vehicles can still access all homes and businesses, but they cannot cross through the neighbourhood. Following a Transport Appraisal whereby problems of high congestion are identified in residential areas, there may be a role for LDPs in identifying traffic calming measures needed in areas such as LTNs and set out a policy response accordingly in alignment with any local walking and cycling strategies. In a rural context the need to drive for the foreseeable future cannot be overlooked, however on arrival to the nearest settlement, encouraging 'park and walk' culture through interventions could have many benefits.

## Local Services

A fundamental tenet of 20 minute neighbourhoods is the provision of locally accessible services. For the purpose of this briefing services will be considered of those that meet a 'daily' need, although the opportunity to link a range of services to localities should not be overlooked. This includes the daily needs of a variety of stakeholders such as children, young persons and older and disabled persons. When considering the provision of services in localities development planning can provide a policy support for service access to new developments but also from a

---

<sup>22</sup> Transport Scotland (2009) Development Planning and Management Transport Appraisal Guidance. Available here: <https://bit.ly/3biJPd7>

<sup>23</sup> UK Government Department for Transport (2020) Road Traffic Estimates: Great Britain 2019. Available here: <https://bit.ly/3kMzuJm>

<sup>24</sup> Scottish Parliament Information Centre (2020) SPICe briefing - Low traffic neighbourhoods. October. Available here: <https://bit.ly/3c8fygo>



retrofit lens, whether it is supporting the provision of new services in areas deficient of them, or encouraging residential developments in areas well serviced such as town centres. Consideration need also made for any proposals for car dependent out-of-town retail and leisure that are not closely located to populated areas, which may necessitate a blanket presumption against such developments. For children and younger persons, the Planning (Scotland) 2019 Act provisions for play sufficiency assessments, where planning authorities must assess the sufficiency of play opportunities in its area for children in preparing an evidence report. The impending regulations for play sufficient assessments provide another opportunity to tie in the 20 minute neighbourhood concept.

## Open Space Strategies

LDPs have a key role to play in protecting and promoting high quality open and green/blue infrastructure. Such considerations could be framed and aligned with requirements of 20 minute neighbourhoods. In the Planning (Scotland) Act 2019 provisions for Open Space Strategies require a planning authority to set out a strategic framework consisting of policies and proposals as to the development maintenance and use of open space and green infrastructure in their area. To produce these frameworks necessitates an audit of existing open space provision and an assessment of current and future requirements. There is an opportunity to integrate the 20 minute neighbourhoods specifically here with the publication of impending regulations which will make provisions about how planning authorities are to discharge this function. Such provisions could include specific reference to needs of local communities under the lens of a 20 minute neighbourhoods, identifying the need to create new open space strategies, enhance existing spaces including access to them. Forestry and Woodland strategies, another provision set out in the Planning (Scotland) Act 2019, could also be aligned to support the consideration of 20 minute neighbourhoods by identifying opportunities for community woodlands.

# 3. Development Management

Supported by a policy framework with clear vision and robust wording, development management will be an important process of pro-actively managing development in local areas to support 20 minute neighbourhoods. With placemaking principles of 20 minute neighbourhoods embedded in the NPF4, development management planners can have the confidence to refuse applications which do not align with the design principles and have their decisions upheld at appeal. For the purposes of this briefing three areas of development management will be considered:

- Pre-application process
- Planning obligations
- Performance

## Pre-application process

Pre-application discussions are an important part of the development management process. Through early engagement with prospective applicants, the planning authority and statutory consultees have an opportunity to discuss important issues in advance of the submission of a formal application. They can improve the quality of planning applications, mitigate potential negative impacts, address misunderstandings and where practicable, address community issues. A 20 minute neighbourhood design-led approach could be integrated into different stages of the pre-application process. Investment in upfront development frameworks, masterplans and Masterplan Consent Areas could help support formation and reinforcement of 20 minute neighbourhoods. They could do so by setting out codes and regimes which establish what can and cannot be built in terms of design, layout and phasing. This would also provide predictability for investors and developers, which in turn gives them a sound basis for making decisions. A more

general criteria framework checklist process could also be harnessed, requiring developers to show how proposals meet envisioned outcomes of the 20 minute neighbourhood. There is an opportunity to align and integrate Health Impact Assessments at this stage of the planning process, provisions for which are within the Planning Scotland Act (2019). There is also an opportunity to align a revised Pre-Application Consultation process with the considerations of 20 minute neighbourhood to ensure that there is strong community buy-in secured from communities at an early stage.

## Planning obligations

Planning obligations provide a mechanism by which any potential negative impacts on land use, the environment and infrastructure of development can be reduced, eliminated or compensated for. When considered essential they must be related and proportionate to the development in question. LDPs have an important role to play in setting out the potential need for and use of planning obligations and could play a role in setting out infrastructure requirements to create or reinforce successful 20 minute neighbourhoods. This could require a revised method assessment of infrastructure requirements to include considerations of:

- Play and recreational facilities
- Low Traffic Neighbourhoods
- Urban Realm improvements
- Green infrastructure provision
- Daily service provision
- Active travel networks

There is also an opportunity to utilise the proposed Infrastructure Levy, provisions for which are set out within the Planning (Scotland) Act 2019, with guidance still to be published on how Infrastructure Levy income should be spent. A clearer definition of what constitutes a strategic active travel networks will support consideration of this particular infrastructure requirement.

## Outcomes-focused performance measures

As a means of improving the performance of planning services, a range of Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) are measured yearly and inform the production of Planning Performance Frameworks. However these performance assessments historically have tended to be narrowly centred on process metrics such as the speed of processing applications, the number of consents given and the amount of housing units delivered. However if we are seeking better quality placemaking outcomes this will require a change in how we measure performance. The 'Measuring What Matters; Planning Outcomes Research'<sup>25</sup> published in 2020 by the RTPi provides a toolkit and routemap to moving towards an outcomes based approach to performance management. This ties in directly with the need to understand what data sets are necessary and what digital solutions are in place to monitor performance as previously discussed.

RTPi Scotland believes that the NPF4 should be structured around outcomes which are tied into planning authority performance assessment frameworks and priority strategic themes on achieving climate action, delivering a net zero carbon Scotland and improved health and wellbeing. Metrics associated with the delivery of 20 minute neighbourhoods could be incorporated into a new outcomes-focused performance framework, with a role for the new Improvement Coordinator role - provisions for which are set out in the Planning (Scotland) Act 2019 - to set out how to measure progress on new policy initiatives. An existing means of assessing the outcome of the planning process in terms of design and place quality are Design Quality Audits. These could be amended

---

<sup>25</sup> RTPi (2020) Measuring What Matters: Planning Outcomes Research. November. Available here: <https://bit.ly/3c8jzBc>

to include placemaking considerations associated with 20 minute neighbourhoods and applicants can be encouraged to use the Quality Audit as a basis for their Design Statements.

## 4. Place-based partnerships

The successful operationalisation of 20 minute neighbourhoods will require the collaborative work across a wide range of stakeholders in the public sector, private sector, third sector and in the communities themselves. Consideration of 20 minute neighbourhoods needs applied to a range of public sector decision making areas such as planning, Community Planning, asset management, street maintenance, investment, health and education service provision. RTPI Scotland believes that there is a clear opportunity to deliver 20 minute neighbourhoods using new place-based ways of working embedding this approach in the NPF4, in the operationalisation of the Place Principle and through new approaches to community engagement through Local Place Plans, a new provision set out in the Planning (Scotland) Act. 2019.

A place-based approach is about considering all aspects of a place when considering an intervention. The Place Standard tool provides a simple framework to structure conversations about place. This includes both physical and social elements of place structured around 14 themes. RTPI Scotland have called on the NPF4 to embed “Place and Wellbeing” themes from the Place Standard Tool to provide an evidenced, consistent framework for Scotland<sup>26</sup>. As a national level “Place and Wellbeing” policy requirement they provide a simple, understandable remit for how place impacts behaviour change to improve health and wellbeing, reduce carbon emissions and improve biodiversity. The themes are valuable for their contribution to all aspects of place, especially interventions underpinning 20 minute neighbourhoods. They are simple, already well understood and all sectors with an interest in place are already using them. Public Health Scotland are due to complete a full evidence review of these themes to update the initial evidence used to inform them.

### Place Principle

The Scottish Government and COSLA have agreed to adopt the Place Principle to help overcome organisational and sectoral boundaries. This includes improving coordination between stakeholders, enhancing collaboration and communication across local authorities departments, key agencies, NGOs and private sector. The principle requests that all those responsible for providing services and looking after assets in a place need to work and plan together, and with local communities, to improve the lives of people, support inclusive growth and create more successful places. The Place Principle supports collaborative place-based action and the Place Standard is a commonly-used tool to help people think about the quality of their place and where action might be required. If the Place Principle is to be effective there is a need to ‘give it teeth’ and operationalise its work so it influences policy, practice and investment on the ground. RTPI Scotland believes that the planning system can be a facilitator of the Place Principle and place-based approaches. RTPI Scotland wish to see a clear articulation of how the NPF4 can embed, operationalise and champion the Place Principle. As a part of this there needs to be a stronger recognition of the role that proactive planning and place-leadership can have through the enhanced corporate influence of planning. There is an opportunity to achieve this through the Chief Planning Officer role, provisions for which are set out in the Planning (Scotland) Act 2019.

There is a need for a stronger policy framework and the introduction of measures to ensure that public authorities publicly report on how they have embedded the Place Principle in their

---

<sup>26</sup> RTPI Scotland (2020) 10 Big Ideas for National Planning Framework 4 - RTPI Scotland response to Scottish Government’s call for ideas. May. Available here: <https://bit.ly/3lqSD3S>

approaches and how they have applied it in their decision making, including any reasoning. This should also apply to the Town Centre First Principle, as there needs to be greater transparency on how it these principles are considered in the decision making process. Appropriate enforcement may be required if necessary and public funding opportunities could be offered with a stipulation that there is adherence to the Place Principle and, where relevant, the Town Centre First Principle.

Once established, the Place Principle could help address many areas that would support the delivery a 20 minute neighbourhood including:

- Aligning Local Place Plans, Local Outcome Improvement Plans, Locality Plans and LDPs to ensure reciprocity
- Supporting the Infrastructure First Principle, Reuse First Principle and Town Centre First Principle.
- Help overcome fragmented property ownership within town and city centres including a more pro-active approach to land assembly.
- Develop proposals for Compulsory Sale Orders to make use of derelict and vacant land and buildings and deliver active travel networks.
- Support Town Centre Actions Plans.
- Co-coordinating investment across stakeholders towards place-based interventions.

## Local Place Plans

Local Place Plans (LPPs) were introduced as a provision in the 2019 Planning (Scotland) Act. They are an exciting new type of plan providing opportunities for communities to develop proposals and ideas for the development of where they live. LPPs can help community planning and land-use planning achieve better outcomes for communities. RTPI Scotland believe there is a clear opportunity to integrate emerging Local Place Plans with the aspirations of 20 minute neighbourhoods, especially through the drafting of impending guidance. Local Place Plans and 20 minute neighbourhoods are both concerned with making everyday neighbourhoods and environments better places to live, work and play. They can help planners to communicate strategic overarching considerations and allow communities plan priorities for interventions, conveying detailed local understanding. A lot of these strategic considerations could be covered by many of the fundamental aspirations of 20 minute neighbourhoods, tailored to the specific circumstance and context of localities. Planners can in turn bring the vital links to other departments, agendas and organisations that help to navigate the system and turn community aspirations into reality.

Local community-led planning has been around for many years in the form of Community Action Planning and there are a range of existing projects that could be tied into LPPs and 20 minute neighbourhoods. For example the Sustaining Choices is pilot project delivered by Paths for All and Planning Aid Scotland<sup>27</sup>. The projects aim to produce a series of community-led active travel plans across Scotland. In the future similar approaches could be integrated into the LPP process.

However, for LPPs to succeed there needs to be funding set aside to support communities to develop them. There is currently no designated funding in place to support them to do this, although their success may well depend on this. It has been estimated that each LPP could cost between £10,000 - £30,000 each<sup>28</sup>. There is also a need to secure on-going funding for maintenance of any interventions identified. Full consideration also needs made as to how a diverse range of ages can be involved and how both geographic communities and communities of interest be engaged in the LPP preparation process.

---

<sup>27</sup> <https://www.pas.org.uk/sustainingchoices/>

<sup>28</sup> RTPI Scotland (2019) Financial Implications of Implementing the Planning (Scotland) Act 2019. August. Available here: <https://bit.ly/3uRbtFT>

<https://www.rtpi.org.uk/policy-and-research/>

**RTPI - Royal Town Planning Institute**

**scotland@rtpi.org.uk**

**Tel: 0370 774 9494**

**Report author – Robbie Calvert**

Royal Town Planning Institute,  
41 Botolph Lane, London EC3R 8DL.  
Registered Charity in England (262865) & Scotland (SC037841)

