

# #Planning4People: a Manifesto

## The foundations of a good society

We all care about the quality of our lives and condition of our communities. People need decent healthcare, schools, jobs, public transport, green spaces, locally grown food, low-carbon energy, affordable homes which are accessible and have enough space for kids to play, a creative culture, vibrant sports and the arts. These are all things that make life worth living. These are the things that all sections of society should be able to enjoy as a matter of course regardless of where they live or their ability to pay. These are the foundations of the good society.

## The problem with planning in England

Many of Europe's best cities already achieve these things, yet here in the UK we seem to have lost sight of this vision and to have given up on delivering better places. This is ironic since Britain invented town planning as a democratic way of shaping the future with a visionary drive for building places of the highest quality that worked to enhance nature rather than destroy it. Planning is vital to making great places but over the last thirty years its reputation has declined. This is partly because it lost sight of any vision that connected with people's real lives and partly because planning regulation was seen a break on the free market. We know this is wrong: the countries that are creating great places have strong planning systems. However, it has become a powerful myth and has led to us losing any collective idea of how to shape the future.

Planning is a democratic tool in the otherwise messy business of shaping the future and sharing scarce resources, but over the last five years it has been systematically dismantled. In England there is no longer a national or regional way of working out solutions to our problems such as housing need and regeneration. Meanwhile, relaxing permitted development has led to tens of thousands of new homes being created without having to get planning permission (for example, through the conversion of commercial buildings into homes), and this means that little or no thought is given to the most basic issues, such as where children can play or whether there are enough doctors' surgeries in the area. More and more development is being approved in piecemeal locations, often through appeals, leading to development that is often poorly served by infrastructure such as roads, hospitals or schools. We are producing fewer and fewer affordable and social homes so homelessness and affordability are blighting people's lives. Finally, the Government's building standards regime means there is no national minimum space or accessibility standard for new homes. Room sizes are now the smallest in Europe, and in some cases are so small that you cannot even fit the most basic furniture into them. Each one of these changes on its own may not have much impact. But taken together they amount to an assault on decent place-making and risk creating a legacy of poorly serviced, badly designed places that don't provide for those in greatest housing need.

## What is #Planning4People?

**#Planning4People** is a coalition of organisations and individuals who share a common belief in the value of place making to achieve a just and sustainable future. Together we are determined to ensure that planning shapes the kind of places that this nation deserves. Planning must change so it is genuinely focused on people's needs. Our objective is to bring about the rebirth of the creative social town planning which did so much to lay the foundation of a civilised Britain. Our guiding principles are that planning should be:

- democratic and fair with people at the heart of the process;
- guided by a powerful definition of sustainable development which emphasises social justice as a key outcome;
- powerful so it can regulate change; and

- responsible, so that it meets the basic needs of those who struggle most today, without restricting the ability of future generations to live decent lives.

## So what would social town planning mean?

Social town planning means managing change through a fair and democratic process to achieve long-term outcomes that are in the wider public interest. These objectives are underpinned by the values of sustainable development but have a specific concern to reduce inequalities of income, education and health, and to promote places where individuals and communities can achieve lasting levels of happiness and wellbeing. Put simply, social town planning has the fate of people at its heart. It seeks to empower communities and to redistribute resources to enable everyone to live a fulfilling life.

In order to achieve this agenda we are asking national **Government** for:

- **A new legal duty in planning legislation:** *This would mean amending the 2004 Planning Act to insert a strong outcome-based duty on sustainable development with a specific requirement to reduce social inequality.*
- **Giving councils back power over permitted development:** *This would mean the full restoration of powers over permitted development to local authorities.*
- **A new policy priority in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) which ensures social justice and outcomes for people are just as important as the needs of land-owners and developers:** *This would mean ensuring the viability test reflects the long-term costs, or savings, of actions to the public purse, such as the saving that the Lifetime Homes agenda could offer for the health and social care budget and therefore to the wider economy.*
- **The restoration of a comprehensive framework of place-making standards:** *This would include new national minimum standards for housing with mandatory minimum standards for accessibility and space.*

We are asking **Local Government** to:

- **Adopt a strong social dimension to local plans:** *This means shaping policy that prioritises the social dimension of place-making, providing for the full range of hard and soft infrastructure, and ensuring social and affordable homes receive the highest priority.*

We are asking the **private and third sectors** to:

- **Establish a corporate commitment to a fair and inclusive planning system:** *This means supporting this manifesto and voluntarily adopting the standards on accessibility and space.*

We are asking **planning professionals and academics** to:

- **Transform planning education:** *This will ensure planners have the right skills in community development. It would also mean that academics prioritise research into the social consequences of planning decisions and how they can be improved to deliver progressive social outcomes.*

**#Planning4People** is an ambitious education and advocacy programme which aims to improve the lives of our communities by laying the foundations for fairness, innovation and inclusion that will lead to lasting improvements in our health, wellbeing and happiness. It is led by the TCPA ([www.tcpa.org.uk](http://www.tcpa.org.uk)) with support from the Webb Memorial Trust ([www.webbmemorialtrust.org.uk](http://www.webbmemorialtrust.org.uk)).

**Sign up to support Planning4People** or find out more by emailing: [planning4people@tcpa.org.uk](mailto:planning4people@tcpa.org.uk)