The Sheffield declaration

A new beginning for democratic planning

We the undersigned believe that democratic planning is a vital way of securing a peaceful and sustainable future in an era defined by crisis and conflict. We recognise that our current system has drifted away from the values of social justice which founded the planning movement.

As result, we declare our commitment to regenerating the art and science of democratic planning by supporting a new set of values as our core purpose and a new ethical code for town planners.

A new purpose for planning.

Planning is the way that society takes responsibility for our planet and the flourishing of all people, both now and in the future. It does this through:

- The empathetic stewardship of place and space to support socially just outcomes,
- democratic co-production with communities,
- removing health and economic inequalities by promoting social equity and social justice, and
- respecting environmental and ecological limits, in order to create inclusive and joyful places where people and nature thrive.

A new ethical code for planners.

As planners we will:

Principle 1: Work for sustainable development.

a. Use the principles of sustainable development as the guiding influence in our work to ensure outcomes which simultaneously and holistically support nature, people and the creation of social value, both now and for future generations.

b. Seek social justice by working to expand choice and opportunity for all persons, emphasising our special responsibility to plan with those who have been marginalised or disadvantaged and to promote, gender, racial and economic equity.

c. Recognise and work to mitigate the impacts of existing plans and procedures that result in patterns of discrimination, displacement, or environmental injustice.

d. Prioritise actions which address the climate crisis and support nature restoration by ensuring we respect environmental limits.

e. Ensure the fair redistribution of development values to enable the creation of inclusive places and long-term stewardship.

Principle 2: Do no harm.

a. Ensure all decisions positively promote the physical and mental health and wellbeing of people.

b. Do nothing positively, or by omission, which may cause harm to the health and wellbeing of people or irrevocable damage to the natural environment.

Principle 3: Serve the public interest with integrity and openness.

a. Exercise fair, honest, skilled, informed and independent professional judgment.
b. Serve as advocates for private interests only when the client's objectives are consistent with the public interest and this ethical code.
c. Avoid a conflict of interest, or even the appearance of a conflict of interest, in accepting assignments from clients or employers.
d. Abstain completely from direct or indirect participation as an advisor or decision-maker in any matter in which there is a personal or pecuniary interest, and leave any chamber in which such a matter is under deliberation.
e. Fearlessly expose corruption wherever discovered.

Principle 4: Support democratic decision-making and foster public trust.

a. Be conscious of and respect the rights of others. Develop skills that enable better communication and more effective, respectful, and compassionate planning efforts with all communities, especially underrepresented communities and marginalised people, so that they may fully participate in planning.
b. Respect the experience, knowledge, and history of all people.
c. Ensure that people have the opportunity for meaningful and informed participation in decisions that may affect them. Participation should be broad enough to include those who lack formal organisation or influence, especially underrepresented communities and marginalised people. Attention and resources should be given to issues of equity, diversity, and inclusion and should reflect the diversity of the community.
d. Educate and empower the public about planning issues and their relevance to everyone's lives.

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Signed by:

Dr Hugh Ellis