Local living and 20-minute neighbourhoods: draft planning guidance

Response from the Landscape Institute

For Architecture, Place and Design Innovation, Scottish Government

Date 10 August 2023

# Background for members

The fourth National Planning Framework (NPF4) set out a commitment to think differently about places in Scotland, and to ensure places remain resilient and adaptable. A key element of this agenda is the need to plan, design and deliver places that support local living and 20-minute neighbourhoods, where people can meet the majority of their daily needs within a reasonable distance of their home.

This consultation considers the draft local living and 20-minute neighbourhood planning guidance which is intended to assist and support local authorities, communities, and others with an interest in local living and 20-minute neighbourhoods. It is expected to be of particular relevance in the preparation of Local Development Plans (LDPs), Local Place Plans (LPPs) and to support planning decision making.

The draft guidance does not introduce any new policy requirements or duties and is intended to provide additional detail and clarification of existing policy in order to support effective and efficient implementation. The guidance builds on comments received about local living and 20-minute neighbourhoods during engagement on National Planning Framework 4.

The guidance is informed by the associated Impact Assessment Report Update.

# Landscape Institute response

The consultation is based on a four-part guidance document, that outlines Scottish Government’s approach to local living and 20-minute neighbourhoods, along with an impact assessment update report. The consultation comprises 10 questions covering each of the key themes, including a question on the impact assessment –

* Part one - Local living and the benefits of 20-minute neighbourhoods.
* Part two – Local living framework diagram.
* Part three – Ways to support local living and 20-minute neighbourhoods.
* Part four – Case studies.

# Summary

* Additional clear messaging, effective communications, and guidance to support positive community engagement is needed from national government and at local levels.
* The use of case studies to demonstrate real life examples of the policy in action is welcome.
* It will be crucial to make benefits clear and relevant to local areas and groups of people by highlighting tangible benefits to them.
* The links with NPF4 and the wider policy agenda will be key, and the use of the place principle is helpful in ensuring a common approach throughout.
* It will take the skills and expertise of landscape professionals to ensure that a high-quality design approach is taken in designing sustainable and successful places.
* The framework diagram is a useful visual representation of the policy and the link with the place standard design tool will provide a foundation for all developments.
* The categories provide a holistic overview of the key objectives of the policy and are useful in connecting wider environmental and climate change goals with health, well-being, and the needs of communities.
* Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS)should be included in the descriptor of the space category.
* There is a strong role for landscape professionals to play in designing multi-functional places which address issues such as the safety of public spaces.
* Landscape should be considered across all of the categories as a multi-functional foundation for sustainable places.
* The use of GIS and spatial mapping tools will be a key source of quantitative data and will require the skills and input of landscape professionals.
* There can be a tendency for ‘engagement fatigue’, and for community engagement to be effective developers need to be enabled to demonstrate ‘quick wins’.
* Expertise from the landscape sector will be needed in all aspects of the planning and development of local living and itis important that the sector is directly mentioned in the collaboration section of the guidance.
* The interconnectivity of the wider policy agenda that will support the development of local living is welcome, although it will be important that planning and investment decisions do not become too complex.
* It will be essential to consider the connectivity with 20-minute neighbourhoods and the wider landscape, especially the interconnectivity with green spaces and nature networks.

# Part One – Local living and the benefits of 20-minute neighbourhoods

**Part 1 of the guidance explains that local living and 20-minute neighbourhoods in Scotland have the potential to contribute to global, national as well as local goals around climate action, decreased health inequalities, improved local economy and improved liveability/quality of life.**

**It explains how local living and 20-minute neighbourhoods can be a means of tackling the interrelated environmental, social and economic challenges we face in Scotland through the alignment with policy context, the place context and the rural and island contexts.**

### 1. How helpful is part 1 of the guidance in furthering the understanding of local living and 20-minute neighbourhoods in a Scottish context?

Response: Somewhat helpful

The guidance is clear in its’ description of local living and 20-minute neighbourhoods, however feedback from our members has described challenges from the use of the phrase “20-minute neighbourhoods”. There have been issues around community engagement when undertaking new projects, with the concept being misinterpreted as a means to contain and control communities to stay within a 20-minute perimeter. Although the guidance clearly highlights the benefits and objectives of local living, there will need to be additional clear messaging, effective communications, and guidance to support positive community engagement. Communications will be required from national government level, as well as at a more local level.

The use of case studies to demonstrate real life examples of the policy in action is welcome, and there is scope to include shorter, ‘snapshot’ case studies throughout the guidance to highlight local benefits and what this might look like to different communities. It will be crucial to make benefits clear and relevant to local areas and groups of people by highlighting the tangible benefits to them, drawing on local needs, priorities and concerns; For example, although we strongly welcome the focus on environmental issues and supporting net zero goals, this may be considered lower priority by people living in disadvantaged areas who are struggling with issues that feel more pressing at a personal and local level. In these cases, it may be more useful to focus on issues such as the improvements 20-minute neighbourhoods will have on quality of life, accessible and affordable public transport and increased local employment through the regeneration of local businesses. Additionally in affluent and rural areas with more car use, reassurance will be needed over issues like active travel and the impact on car use.

There has to be emphasis given to the flexibility of 20-minute neighbourhoods, and an explicit explanation that this is not a prescriptive model, but one that aims to make life easier through more accessible services and facilities. This will be especially important in rural areas, where the focus will be on inter-connectivity rather than distinct 20-minute neighbourhoods.

The links with NPF4 and the wider policy agenda will be key to the rollout of the policy and the use of the place principle is helpful in ensuring a common approach throughout. It is welcome that part one of the guidance highlights the need for collaboration with a wide range of stakeholders, and it will take the skills and expertise of landscape professionals to ensure that a high-quality design approach is taken in applying the place principle and in designing resilient and successful places.

# Part Two – Local living framework diagram

**20-minute neighbourhoods are one method of achieving 'local Living' and the benefits that flow from it. The way in which 'local living' works will vary from place to place and should evolve, over time as a result of place-based activity with communities and across sectors.**

### 2. How helpful is the framework diagram in encouraging flexible, place-based approaches to support local living?

Response – Very helpful

The framework diagram is a useful visual representation of each element of the policy and the direct link with the place standard design tool will be helpful in providing a foundation for all developments. We welcome the outcome-based approach and agree that the framework will be helpful in terms of development planning, management, and design. A high quality, cohesive design approach using the expertise of landscape professionals will be key to the development of successful places, and it is encouraging that the framework diagram highlights this.

The visual element of the diagram is useful in making it an inclusive tool, and it could be adapted to be used in community engagement settings as a means to identify local needs, with the community at the heart of the planning process / framework diagram.

**The categories - Movement, Space, Resources, Civic, and Stewardship and the related key considerations support the local living framework and are detailed in part 2 of the guidance. They provide detail on the important issues that should be considered and where appropriate, addressed for successful local living.**

### 3. Looking at part 2 of the draft guidance: how helpful are the 'categories' and ‘key considerations for local living’ that are captured within this part of the document?

Response - Very helpful

The categories provide a holistic overview of the key objectives of the policy and are useful in connecting wider environmental and climate change goals with health, well-being, and the needs of communities.

We are particularly supportive of the ‘space’ category, which highlights the role of landscape and green spaces within 20-minute neighbourhoods. Access to green spaces will be essential in addressing health inequalities, in making communities attractive places to live and in meeting biodiversity goals. We would suggest the inclusion of Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) in the descriptor of spaces, as the widespread roll out of SuDS will both support the development of green spaces and tree cover in urban spaces, but also ensure that our towns and cities are resilient in the future.

We also welcome the distinct mention of landscape and heritage in the ‘civic’ category and that the category alludes to the distinct character of places, which is one of the six qualities of successful places. There is a strong role for landscape professionals to play in designing multi-functional places which not only make places visually pleasing, but which also address issues such as the safety of public spaces, another key area of the civic category. This has been seen in Glasgow City Council, who have adopted a ‘feminist approach’ to planning which should help ensure that public spaces are inclusive and safer for all people to access.

There is a space for landscape to be considered across all of the categories, as an enabler for well-being, tackling the climate change and biodiversity crises, designing resilient places to live and in connecting towns, cities and wider rural environments.

# Part Three – Ways to support local living and 20-minute neighbourhoods

**Part 3 of the draft guidance offers a structured approach that can assist with delivering local living. Three 'key steps' are detailed that can be repeated for incremental change. These are:**

1. **understand context - understanding the context of the place through the use of quantitative and qualitative information**
2. **collaborate, plan, design- developing collaborative models of working to inform place-based planning and design processes**
3. **implement and review - aligning investment, developing delivery capacity and supporting new ways of working**

### 4. How helpful is the proposed 'structured approach' for use?

Response - very helpful

The structured approach is simple and not over-complicated, and the circular aspect of the approach will help ensure that the planning and development of places remains dynamic, adaptive to change and flexible. The emphasis on collaboration and place- based planning is helpful, as is the recognition of the need for both qualitative and quantitative input to guide the process.

**Part 3 of the draft guidance offers a structured approach to support local living. Three 'key steps' are detailed that can be repeated for incremental change.**

**Key step 1: Understand context - understanding the context of the place through the use of quantitative and qualitative information.**

**This step explains that gaining a full understanding of the context of a place, at the outset, is critical for forming a baseline and for understanding a place.**

**This part of the guidance aims to communicate and emphasise that while quantitative data is important in this regard, the gathering of qualitative information and the way in which this informs action is equally as critical.**

### 5. Does part 3 of the guidance clearly communicate the importance of both qualitative and quantitative data in establishing a baseline for a place?

Response – Yes

The guidance clearly describes the various types of data that will be needed to guide decisions at a local level and makes an equal case for qualitative and quantitative data.

In terms of quantitative data, the use of GIS and spatial mapping tools will be a key component of this and will require the skills and input of landscape professionals. There is an opportunity to connect this with character mapping, which would support consideration of the qualities of local landscapes and enable a localised approach to planning. It will also be important to consider whether amenities are accessible, for example connected by reliable public transport or can be accessed via walking routes that are considered safe and convenient.

The emphasis on the need for a strong community engagement approach to gathering data is welcomed, and it will be important to gain the buy-in of local communities for this policy to be successful. In areas of regeneration, there can be a tendency for ‘engagement fatigue’, and for community engagement to be effective it will be necessary for developers to demonstrate ‘quick wins’, which highlight the direct benefits for local people. This could be done through actively engaging with community groups and considering funding of small local projects or awards programmes through these groups that enable community improvement, for example through community garden projects that support sustainable food production and the development of local green spaces. It may also be useful to consider different ways to directly involve communities in the development of their neighbourhoods, for example through the introduction of community challenge funds to engage communities in master planning activities as part of a framework for community direct action.

The use of master plans, and a clear connection with local development and community planning will help guide the design process, and it will be vital to keep local people informed of research findings and engaged in the development of the spaces in which they live in order for them to be successful.

**This section explains the context for the delivery of local living and 20-minute neighbourhoods beyond planning mechanisms.**

**Local living requires input from a broad range of stakeholders and a cross sector commitment to collaborative working, informing place-based planning and design. It involves coordination across investment plans and opportunities and the bringing together of the knowledge and skills of different organisations and sectors.**

### 6. How helpful is the 'collaborate, plan, design' section of part 3 in supporting collaborative practices?

Response – Somewhat helpful

The use of the place principle as the foundation for collaboration and cross sector involvement in place-based planning is positive, as is the recognition that cross-sector partnership input will be required for the delivery of local living and 20-minute neighbourhoods, however this section does not emphasise enough the role of landscape professionals in working towards objectives. Landscape architects play an integral part in place making through the design of high-quality places and by using their skills in working with local communities and other key stakeholders to collaborate and bring ideas into practice.

We agree that planning authorities will be best place to gather data that will contribute to the planning of local living, however essential input will be needed from the wider landscape sector when undertaking the planning and development stages of 20-minute neighbourhoods and this section of the guidance does not explicitly make mention of this (There is only mention of local authorities, local communities and community planning partners). Expertise from the landscape sector will be needed in master planning, environmental sustainability (Including SuDS), embodied carbon considerations, high quality design, green and blue infrastructure etc… and it is important that the sector is directly mentioned in the guidance.

We strongly support the use of local place plans and the emphasis on community engagement and ownership, and this is made clear by the guidance. There are opportunities to build on the public’s heightened awareness of the environment, post-COVID and on the role of localism in empowering the circularity of goods, materials, and surpluses, as well as a community’s ability to help mitigate climate impacts.

**Key step 3: implement and review - aligning investment, developing delivery capacity and supporting new ways of working.**

**This is the stage at which the action identified in the previous steps could be taken forward or planned for.  
  
This section of the guidance explains that while a number of cross government policies, strategies and investments are aligned to support local living and 20 minute neighbourhoods, there needs to be a cross sectoral alignment of knowledge, skills and resources, local knowledge, insights and capacity to maximise the benefits of local living.**

**The 'trip chain' diagrams in this section demonstrate the issues that can arise for local services when decisions about key infrastructure are made and local living is not prioritised.**

### 7. How helpful is the 'implement and review' section of part 3 in assisting the delivery of collaborative approaches to support local living?

Response – Very helpful

This section of the guidance is very clear in the need for partnership working across sectors to ensure the success of 20-minute neighbourhoods and clearly highlights the impacts that interconnectivity (Or lack of) can have on local living outcomes.

The interconnectivity of the wide policy agenda that will support the development of local living is also welcome, although it will be important that planning and investment decisions do not become too complex, and that guidance is clear and concise. The integration of local living into local development plans over time will be helpful in ensuring that local living becomes common practice and the foundation for all community development.

# Part Four – Case studies

**The case studies in part 4 of the document are included to demonstrate real place-based action being undertaken that helps support local living and 20 minute neighbourhood principles.**

### 8. Looking at part 4 of the draft guidance: do the case studies provide a useful and appropriate range of examples of good practice?

Response - Yes

The case studies give clear examples of real place-based projects, and it is helpful that they cover a variety of settlement types in terms of geography, size of settlements, location, population demographics etc… The use of diagrams, photographs and data is useful in demonstrating real life examples.

There is scope to include shorter, ‘snapshot’ case studies with community input / quotes from local people etc… throughout the guidance to highlight local benefits and what this might look like to different communities. Including the words of local people who have directly experienced the benefits of 20-minute neighbourhoods could help address some of the resistance around the policy.

**The impact assessment report update relates to the draft guidance on local living and 20-minute neighbourhoods, produced to support the fourth National Planning Framework (NPF4).**

**Local living and 20 minute neighbourhoods are included within the policy framework of NPF4, adopted by Scottish Ministers on 13th February.  The concept of local living and 20-minute neighbourhoods is intended to support places where people can meet the majority of their daily needs within a reasonable distance of their home, preferably through active travel modes or by public transport.**

**NPF4 was the subject of extensive consultation and parliamentary scrutiny and an Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA), involving a number of statutory and non-statutory assessments, was prepared for NPF4 and is available on the**[**Transforming Planning**](https://www.transformingplanning.scot/national-planning-framework/integrated-impact-assessment/)**website.**

**The policy intent and outcomes for local living and 20-minute neighbourhoods were included within this assessment process.  Therefore, the impact of the policy has already been assessed and this updated report summarises key content relevant to local living and 20-minute neighbourhoods gathered as part of the previous impact assessment process.  Additional content on the impacts of the draft guidance has been added where relevant or necessary.**

# Part Five - Impact assessment and additional information

**9.** **Looking at the impact assessment update report: do you have any views about the initial conclusions of the impact assessment update report that accompany and inform this guidance?**

Response - No

We have not responded to this question.

**10. Additional information: please provide any further comments on the draft guidance document.**

The concept of 20-minute neighbourhoods is ambitious in its’ goals to build communities, however it will be essential to consider the connectivity with the wider landscape and between settlements. The interconnectivity and accessibility of green spaces and nature networks with 20-minute neighbourhoods will be key in ensuring the health and well-being of communities, as well as of the environment.

About the Landscape Institute

The Landscape Institute (LI) is the chartered body for the landscape profession. We are an educational charity that promotes the art and science of landscape practice.

The LI’s aim, through the work of our members, is to protect, conserve, and enhance the natural and built environment for the public benefit.

The LI provides a professional home for all landscape practitioners including landscape architects, landscape managers, landscape planners, landscape scientists, and urban designers.

About LI policy and research

The LI undertakes research, builds networks, and provides policy advice to local and national policymakers, regulators, and stakeholders. We seek to demonstrate how landscape and green infrastructure can deliver maximum benefits for society, the environment, and the economy.

The work of the LI policy team is overseen by the LI Policy and Communications Committee (PCC), one of three standing committees that report to the LI’s Board of Trustees.

Contact

Hazel Benza, Policy and Partnership Manager  
[hazel.benza@landscapeinstitute.org](mailto:hazel.benza@landscapeinstitute.org) | 0330 808 2230