

PE1595/FFF

Royal Town Planning Institute Scotland Letter of 16 February 2016

Dear Sir/ Madam

**PUBLIC PETITION PE1595
MORATORIUM ON SHARED SPACE SCHEMES**

The Royal Town Planning Institute (RTPI) is the champion of planning and the planning profession. We work to promote the art and science of planning for the public benefit. We have around 2,100 members in Scotland and a worldwide membership of nearly 23,000. We:

- support policy development to improve approaches to planning for the benefit of the public;
- maintain the professional standards of our members;
- support our members, and therefore the majority of the planning workforce, to have the skills and knowledge they need to deliver planning effectively;
- maintain high standards of planning education;
- develop and promote new thinking, ideas and approaches which can improve planning;
- support our membership to work with others who have a role in developing places in Scotland; and
- improve the understanding of planning and the planning system to policy makers, politicians, practitioners and the general public.

RTPI Scotland is grateful for the opportunity to respond to Public Petition PE1595 with regard to a moratorium on shared space schemes. Our response is detailed within this letter.

RTPI Scotland does not believe that there is a need for a moratorium on shared spaces in Scotland. The aims of shared spaces are to discourage vehicles from assuming priority, adapting motorist behaviour, encouraging them to drive more slowly and give way as appropriate. Such spaces that are accessible to both pedestrians and vehicles, allow pedestrians to move more freely, and promote social interaction. The Institute believes that shared spaces can be positive additions to the built environment. They can provide benefits for all people, though they must be well designed to suit the needs of all users of the space.

Design

Quality of design is the key issue with shared spaces. RTPI Scotland supports the plan led system in Scotland which encourages early engagement in planning. We

believe that all users of a new development including shared spaces, or a new shared space initiative in a town centre, should be engaged as early as possible in the process, including local authority Design and Access Panels. By frontloading engagement, this should raise awareness of any potential issues for users of the space early in the process, allowing them to engage in the design process as it progresses.

Legislation, Guidance and Advice

The Department for Transport Local Transport Note 1/11 “Shared Space”, published in October 2011 is a very useful guide to shared spaces, and details considerations that should be taken to ensure the needs of blind and partially sighted people, and individuals with other disabilities, are taken into account in the design and use of the space. While there is a common understanding of shared space in Scotland through *Designing Streets*, published in 2010, there is no formal definition of the term in legislation. RTPI Scotland considers that clarity is required in Scotland on the up to date Scottish Government policy position on shared spaces, including a formal definition to avoid ambiguity or confusion.

Such guidance or legislation specific to Scotland should be updated to also refer to the “[Place Standard](#)”, which is a newly published tool allowing people to assess their place now and in the future based on a framework of different assessments including: moving around, feeling safe, streets and spaces, and social interaction. This assessment can be done over time to determine changes in places, and by different groups of people to determine the inclusivity of the place for a range of people. This tool could be very useful at all stages of the development process to ensure that the needs of all people using a space are taken into account.

Inclusive Design

Through early engagement, and high quality inclusive design, a shared space can be accessible to all. It requires an understanding of people using a space. The Local Transport Note 1/11 makes interesting references to measures that could be put in place to suit blind and partially sighted individuals. This could also be taken forward within updated Scottish guidance, to guide developers and policy makers on the way forward to be as inclusive as possible when designing shared spaces. These include:

- Use of tactile paving which could be reliably detected by blind and partially sighted people (Para 6.35)
- Dispelling myths surrounding shared spaces, for example it has been suggested that it is essential for pedestrians to make eye contact with drivers when crossing a shared space. However this may not be the case, and tests have shown that eye contact does not need to be more than one-way (from

the driver) and that these assertions could undermine the confidence of blind and partially sighted people using the shared space if not fully understood (Para 2.21).

- The most important navigation feature for blind and partially sighted people is the building line (Para 3.13), and the acknowledgement that blind and partially sighted people are likely to want to continue to move along and access the street in a ladder grid pattern despite any efforts to allow pedestrians to move more freely in a space, should be designed into any shared space (Para 6.50).

We must stress that as a profession, planners are committed to working with people and communities, to help them shape the places in which they live. For Example, the Royal Town Planning Institute has made a commitment to the UK Government “Inclusive Environments: Built Environment Industry Action Plan”, The Institute believes that *“the built environment can contribute to a more equal, inclusive and cohesive society if places, facilities and neighbourhoods are designed to be accessible and inclusive for all. Inclusive design aims to remove the barriers that create undue effort and separation”* as stated within the Action Plan. RTPI has agreed to undertake a number of actions as part of this to promote inclusive design. RTPI will:

- Review competencies on courses to ensure inclusive environments are properly supported;
- Collaborate on industry wide and sectorial Continuing Professional Development;
- Reward excellence and celebrate success;
- Champion inclusive design through leadership and promote awareness;
- Collaborate on research, innovation and continual improvement across industry; and
- Communicate best practice to members and encourage knowledge sharing between professional Institutions via Inclusive Environments Hub.

I trust that you will find these comments helpful. If you would like to discuss any aspect, or require clarification of any points raised, please contact me on 0131 229 9628 or by email to craig.mclaren@rtpi.org.uk .

Yours sincerely

Craig McLaren
Director