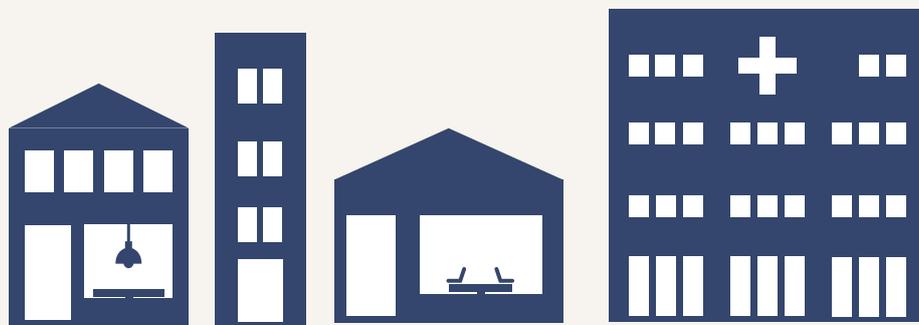




CREATING
BETTER
TOWNS

AIDE-MEMOIRE



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TOWN ‘a place where people live and work, containing many houses, shops, places of work, places of entertainment’¹

1.1 TOWN CENTRE FIRST

(National Planning Policy Framework)²

Local planning authorities should plan positively, to support town centres to generate local employment, promote beneficial competition within and between town centres, and create attractive, diverse places where people want to live, visit and work.

— **The sequential test** should be considered first as this may identify that there are preferable sites in town centres for accommodating main town centre uses (and therefore avoid the need to undertake the impact test). The sequential test will identify development that cannot be located in town centres, and which would then be subject to the impact test.

— **The impact test** determines whether there would be likely significant adverse impacts of locating main town centre development outside of existing town centres (and therefore whether the proposal should be refused in line with policy)

1.2 DECISION MAKING

At the heart of creating better towns is decision-making. Town leaders need to understand the levels of decision making and where they operate. There is a recognised decision-making hierarchy³. You should strive for Knowledge as an individual and Wisdom as an organisation. This delivers the effective leadership required;

— **Wisdom** impossible to share and is as a result of policies developed and accepted by stakeholders so evolved acceptance

— **Knowledge** difficult to share and is personal knowledge about people, places and issues

— **Evidence** often shared but not easily and is the result of analysis of many datasets or scenarios

— **Information** easy to share and the contents of a database assembled from raw facts

— **Data** easy to share and raw facts

“It is not the strongest of the species that survives, not the most intelligent that survives. It is the one that is the most adaptable to change.”

Charles Darwin

1.3 BASE KNOWLEDGE

— How do people (residents, visitors & workers) use your town today?

— How will they use the town in the future?

1.4 APPROACH

Seek to understand before being understood.

Look at why you should do something rather than why you should not.

1.5 KEY QUESTIONS

– **What?** What is the purpose or what are you trying to achieve?

– **Why?** Why is it important that you do this?

– **Who?** Who is key to enabling you to achieve?

– **How?** How will you go about delivering and measuring the change required?

1.6 THE PLACE PRINCIPLE

A principle for taking a place-based approach⁴

Work collaboratively with communities to best use resources in solving problems for places

– **Recognise that** Place is where people, location and resources combine to create a sense of identity and purpose and are at the heart of addressing the needs and realising the full potential of communities. Places are shaped by the way resources, services and assets are directed and used by the people who live in and invest in them. A more joined-up, collaborative, and participative approach to services, land and buildings, across all sectors within a place, enables better outcomes for everyone and increased opportunities for people and communities to shape their own lives.

– **The principle requires** 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.

– **Commitment to taking** A collaborative, place-based approach with a shared purpose to support a clear way forward for all services, assets and investments which will maximise the impact of their combined resources.

1.7 KEY CRITERIA FOR A TOWN PLAN

a – Vision

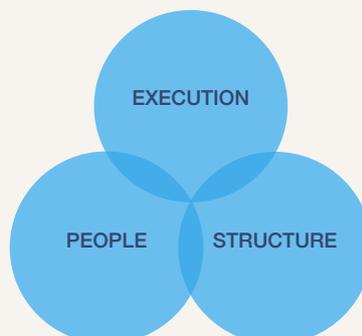
What do you want the future to look like?

This must have meaning and purpose and engage the ‘heart and spirit’.

b – Strategy

Strategy is distinctive positioning with a compelling offer where people, the delivery structure and the execution process are aligned.

How will you execute? What structure? Which people?



c _ Issues

What are the issues that need addressing?

E.D.I.T.

- _ Explore Issues
- _ Define Issues
- _ Identify Solutions
- _ Take Action

Issues for action then create objectives.

d _ Objectives

A specific result that a person or system aims to achieve within a time frame and with available resources

What are the key milestones for the achievement of your objectives?



1.8 THE 'TOWN ESTIMATE'

Creating SMART* objectives for your plan

*Specific Measurable Achievable Realistic

a _ Take an objective

b _ Considerations/Factors Identify any considerations/factors that relate to the objective;

Economic Cost, ROI, capability ...

Environmental Buildings/structures, public realm, control, pollution...

Social People, community, wellbeing/health ...

c _ Courses of action/intervention open What courses of action are open to you in the achievement of this objective? What are their strengths and weaknesses?

d _ Best course of action/intervention What is the best course of action?

e _ Reasons for best course of action/intervention Why is this the best course of action?

f _ Plan How will this objective be executed? What are the measures and milestones?

Creation of an action plan;

What? Why? How? Support required? By when?

g _ Actions on' (response to) changes that might happen during intervention – identify possible changes during the term of the objective's execution that might change and how you will adjust accordingly.

1.9 DATA

Facts and statistics collected together for reference or analysis.

a _ The ability to capture, analyse and visualise data is key to executing a successful plan and a high level of engagement and leadership. Key data include;

Transport _ Business churn _ Health _ Leisure facilities

Commercial Lease events _ Footfall _ Demographics

Education _ Business occupiers _ Retail sales _ Parking

Sport/Fitness _ Landlord register _ Crime _ Social media

Markets _ Vacancy rates _ Housing _ Events _ Employment

- b** _ The key question you must ask before using data is; What question am I trying to answer or what objective am I measuring?
- c** _ Data's source (primary, secondary or modelled), currency (age), coverage and context must be understood before use.
- d** _ Having a capability to visualise and share data is important for community engagement.

“Tell me and I forget, teach me and I may remember, involve me and I learn.”

Benjamin Franklin

1.10 PLACE MARKETING

The ability for a place to differentiate itself from all others and promote its unique characteristics.

- a** _ What are your strengths, differentiators and competitive advantage?
- b** _ How do you communicate your message to residents, visitors and workers?
- c** _ Can someone easily access online useful and current information on your town including shops, events, opening hours, history, eating out, parking, culture and education?

Common Critical Flaws

- _ No differentiators
- _ Have but don't know
- _ Know but don't tell
- _ Don't have or use measurements

Is what you measure aligned to what the community values?

1.11 DIGITAL

Digital content and social media content that is distributed or shared using computers or mobile phones.

Key principles;

CONTENT _ CONTACT _ CONVERSATION

Aims of a digital town strategy

- a** _ Compelling campaigns and town imagery across all platforms.
- b** _ Use of Geolocation data and Demographics sourced from Social for insights.
- c** _ Optimise the town's marketing reach and increase footfall and awareness.
- d** _ **Branding** A smarter, wider use of multi-media can rejuvenate town's image.
- e** _ **Focus** Authenticity, help make followers feel involved and engaged with the town – building volunteering and participation



Best Use

Regular posting (weekly is the minimum), cross channel and aligned to your strategy (i.e. should be an objective in your plan)

- a _ Competitions
- b _ #Hashtags
- c _ Stories
- d _ Engage influencers

1.12 BUILDING USE

Redundant buildings can be **HUBS** and be used to empower start-ups and SMEs by providing world class facilities, developing a platform of skills exchange, and creating employment opportunities. This will enhance and revitalise the local high street and community, and enable public engagement, education, training and apprenticeships.

Hub examples include;

- _ Co-working studios
- _ Micro manufacturing
- _ Events
- _ Training and R&D
- _ Shop and gallery
- _ Restaurant, café and bar

1.13 PUBLIC REALM

The spaces around and between buildings including streets, squares and parks. These have a major part to play in the character, attractiveness and success of a town. When well-planned it encourages sustainable modes of travel such as walking, cycling and public transport.

Key considerations;

GREEN _ CLEAN _ INCLUSIVE _ SECURE _ OPEN

“Towns face many common but also unique challenges in a world where technology, the relationship between people and places is changing ever faster. These changes present great opportunities and therefore understanding the form and function of a town today is critical to understanding its role in the future. Creating better towns should be at the forefront of every government, community and business.”

Matthew Hopkinson, Didobi

¹ Cambridge Dictionary

² <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/ensuring-the-vitality-of-town-centres>

³ Geographic Information Science and Systems. Longley, Goodchild, Maguire & Rhind

⁴ Scottish Government and COSLA

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