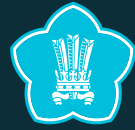


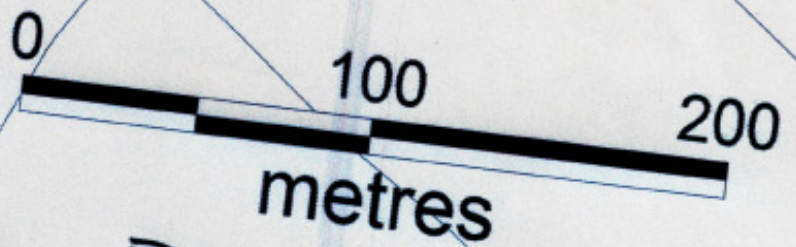
**COMMUNITY
CONNECTEDNESS**

BUILDING
RESILIENT,
HARMONIOUS
COMMUNITIES



**PRINCE'S
FOUNDATION**

FOR BUILDING COMMUNITY



DAY 4 - MASTERPL

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INTRODUCTION

The global urban population is increasing at an unprecedented rate, bringing with it challenges and opportunities for countries across the world. It is predicted that by 2050 the world's urban population will almost double from 3.4 to 6.4 billion people, making sustainable urbanisation one of the most pressing issues of the twenty-first century.

With this rise in our urban population, the way we design and build our cities and towns becomes ever more critical to our physical and mental well-being. Overcrowding, the poor provision of housing and public spaces and a lack of skills capacity to meet urban challenges all threaten the creation of harmonious, resilient communities around the world.

We have been working around the world to address these issues, ensuring that we not only meet the rising housing demand, but that we also do so in a way that fosters a harmonious relationship with nature, while enhancing people's quality of life.

Connectivity, walkability, ample green space and mixed-tenure housing all have integral parts to play in the creation of places that can support resilient, inclusive communities. Without enough consideration for these factors we risk repeating mistakes of the past, isolating people and removing those elements that we believe are vital to healthy communities.

By championing our principles, educating people and enabling exemplar projects we have showcased the benefits of sustainable urbanism for almost two decades. In all our work we put the community at the heart of the process, giving people the chance to play a key part in shaping the future of their built environment.

It is through thought-provoking events like the one we are all attending here in Toronto that we can learn from each other, share our experience and engage in dialogues to address the issues surrounding community connectedness. We hope to unpack the role of the built environment in relation to the challenges of social isolation and connectedness, as we believe this field has a crucial role to play in creating harmonious, resilient communities.

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Without the support, commitment and belief of The Prince's Foundation I would have not been able to grow a sustainable business that now directly employs other craftspeople."

JONNY BRIGGS, ALUMNUS AND TUTOR

WHAT WE DO

By championing our principles, educating people and enabling exemplar projects we are promoting the benefits and possibilities of sustainable urbanism across the world.

CHAMPIONING

For almost two decades we have been promoting the benefits of sustainable urban development, community engagement and traditional building skills.

We believe that these three elements play a key part in the creation of holistic places that can help us meet the urban challenges of the 21st century whilst fostering healthy, enduring communities.

Our research, extensive experience in the field and widespread network of partners and organisations puts us in a unique position to push the agenda forward and continue to champion those principles that can help us understand how to deal with the pressures of an increasingly urban future.

In March 2014 we released our *Housing London* report, promoting the benefits of mid-rise, mixed tenure, developments in the UK's capital. Our report was not only extremely well-received by national and local media, it also put a solution for the city's housing need on the map, providing an alternative to the soulless housing estates of the past or the high-rise developments catering solely for those in the upper-income brackets.

We continue to push the debate forward and are always finding ways to champion our principles across the world.



ENABLING

Our enabling projects team is dedicated to seeing exemplar builds come to fruition, showcasing the possibilities of sustainable, holistic development.

We have worked with our partners across world, ranging from developers, institutions, land owners and community members to deliver innovative, practical projects. Ranging from city and town extensions through to brownfield remediation and community builds,

these projects are all tied together by our commitment to putting theory into practice.

Through our work with likeminded partners we have proven the viability and success of sustainable development all across the world, from Scotland to Sierra Leone.

EDUCATING

We equip professionals, graduates, and the public with the skills they need to design, build and maintain sustainable communities.

There is a global skills shortage in sustainable development, urban design and traditional building skills. We are helping to train the experts who will fill that gap. Our programmes range from a three-week summer school diploma through to an MSc in partnership with the University of Oxford.

Concurrently, our crafts training programmes are helping us pass essential skills to the next generation of craftspeople before they are lost forever. We believe that heritage skills have a key role to play in the 21st century, both in the construction of new buildings and in the maintenance of heritage sites and builds.

By bringing these two strands together during our annual Summer School we are helping different professionals, from an array of backgrounds understand how they all have an important part to play in sustainable, holistic development.



DRAWING CLASSES IN LONDON



KNOCKROON, A SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN EAST AYRSHIRE

BUILT ENVIRONMENT & COMMUNITY CONNECTEDNES

Studies have shown that the built environment plays a crucial role in our experience of social inclusion

COMMUNITY CONNECTEDNESS HAS A KEY ROLE TO PLAY IN ACHIEVING RESILIENCE

Social exclusion can be understood as “the inability to keep all groups and individuals within reach of what we expect as a society...the tendency to push vulnerable and difficult individuals into the least popular places, furthest away from our common aspirations”¹. While the relationship between the built environment and social inclusion is not deterministic, it is a powerful one. As noted in a Canadian-based study, “the goal of urban form should be to create inclusion in natural ways, with the recognition that form can facilitate/promote inclusion, but can not create it”². Important aspects of the built form in relation to social inclusion include land-use mix, public transport, public space and social mix.

The way cities are designed, at both the macro and more micro scale, can meaningfully support or obstruct social inclusivity. At the macro scale, research has found that sprawling suburbs “not only restrict opportunities for physical activity and access to healthy food, but also undermine social capital...generally attributed to the increased distances between uses, overt reliance on private car travel and typically ‘closed’ residential urban form”³. The inequality of areas can be traced through a number of built environment qualities, including distances from work, tenure types and public space quality. More vulnerable people are generally concentrated in areas of greater difficulty, creating a system in which poor people and poor conditions “grow together”⁴ and, furthermore, in which problematic neighbourhoods cluster together to create wider areas of our cities with exclusionary problems.

The measurable impacts of these clusters include depression and low morale, adverse effects on children’s social learning, adverse effects on parenting capacities, lower school performance, intense competition for low-skills jobs resulting in lower wages and often withdrawal from the labour market, and a sense of entrapment as the routes out of poverty are less apparent.⁵

At the more local scale, the success of our cities and towns depends on the success of our neighbourhoods. Neighbourhood effects (the social interactions that occur close to one’s residence that affect social and economic well-being) are potentially powerful vehicles for inclusion if well designed and supported, or exclusion, if poorly designed and neglected. Place itself can contribute to social isolation through both not protecting against physical and mental illness, as well as through being causal of illness. Visual prompts in our built environments also identify socially excluded populations and work to reinforce the sense of exclusion within that community. The public realm has the potential to be inclusive at the personal level if communities are engaged in the design process, as individuals can then identify with their contribution and investment in the design of a space, fostering a greater sense of belonging.

Urban design and planning also plays a key role in the provision of facilities for community engagement. Simple elements like bus stops, benches and local gardens encourage incidental interactions which help to build community cohesion. The social effects of our spatial plans should be crucial in how we judge the success of our built environment. Research suggests that planning policies based on new urbanism design principles (including a mixture of uses, walkable streets and densification) generally encourages social interaction. The strategic provision of green spaces “beyond their traditional role as recreational areas”⁶ has also been identified as a key resource in the face of booming urban population. The provision and improvement of green spaces serve to enable increased physical activity, social connectivity and improved mental wellbeing.

“In Canada, the idea of social inclusion may offer the potential to re-energize old debates... [it] sets higher expectations for change and reaches for more ambitious indicators. Combined with urban form, it further focuses on cities and their importance economically, politically, socially and culturally. It also highlights awareness of the importance of place and interest in the role of neighbourhoods”

CANADA MORTGAGE AND HOUSING CORPORATION, URBAN FORM AND SOCIAL INCLUSION

ENGAGING COMMUNITIES IN THE CREATION OF THEIR BUILT ENVIRONMENT SUPPORTS SUSTAINABLE CHANGE

The co-creation of space is crucial in enabling proactive responses to social isolation. Planning and negotiation that facilitates interaction and sharing between people is a key tool in the promotion of social inclusion in communities. This tool not only requires the opening up planning processes and decision-making structures, but actively seeking out those who are often marginalised from participation in the creation of the places in which they live (the elderly, for example). Research suggests that “participation in shaping the built environment supports interaction and psychological health directly by encouraging a sense of empowerment and custodianship”⁷.

Trends in participation are steadily declining, and this coupled with the rise in lone-person households in many of our cities, means that it is now more important than ever that we are cognisant of the key role that our built environment can play in encouraging social inclusivity and community connectivity. One of the most potentially corrosive effects of social exclusion in our cities and towns is loneliness. Research over time has linked loneliness to a number of poor physical and mental health conditions⁸. People living alone are more vulnerable, both socially and economically, in the face of adversity, than those living with others⁹, and this vulnerability is exacerbated by poor mobility options and poor accessibility to amenities- both of which are factors of our built environments. Denser, mixed-use communities help to support more localised amenities and makes important public transit options more viable.

Studies¹⁰ have shown that ‘neighbourliness’ of a community is a key factor in tackling loneliness. ‘Neighbourliness’ can be supported and encouraged through the creation of opportunities for social interaction and the creations of safe communities. Important attributes identified in the creation of a ‘caring community’ include suitable housing, accessible public spaces and facilities and meeting over shared concern (through initiatives such as allotments for example)¹¹. Walkability is also key in encouraging incidental and casual meetings which can compact loneliness and isolation. The promotion of walkability and the provision of accessible public space supports a built environment as the basis for an active, convivial and engaged society and a “platform upon which an increasingly inclusive community can live, work and play”¹².

¹ Power, A. & Wilson, W.J. 2000. Social Exclusion and the Future of Cities. CASE paper 35. London School of Economics.

² Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation. 2007. Urban Form and Social Inclusion. Socio-economic series 07-2007

³ City Futures Research Centre, University of New South Wales. 2011. Healthy Built Environments: A Review of the Literature. The Healthy Built Environments Program (HBEP)

⁴ Power, A. & Wilson, W.J. 2000. Social Exclusion and the Future of Cities. CASE paper 35. London School of Economics.

⁵ IBID

⁶ City Futures Research Centre, University of New South Wales. 2011. Healthy Built Environments: A Review of the Literature. The Healthy Built Environments Program (HBEP)

⁷ City Futures Research Centre, University of New South Wales. 2011. Healthy Built Environments: A Review of the Literature. The Healthy Built Environments Program (HBEP)

⁸ Cacioppo & Patrick, 2008 in Hole, K. 2011. Loneliness compendium: examples from research and practice. Joseph Rowntree Foundation; Griffin, 2010 in Hole, K. 2011. Loneliness compendium: examples from research and practice. Joseph Rowntree Foundation

⁹ Kenway, P. & Palmer, G. 2006. Social Exclusion: some possible broader areas of concern. Joseph Rowntree Foundation.

¹⁰ Cacioppo, J et al. 2010. A meta-analysis of interventions to reduce loneliness in Hole, K. 2011. Loneliness compendium: examples from research and practice. Joseph Rowntree Foundation.

¹¹ Heins, G. 2010 in Hole, K. 2011. Loneliness compendium: examples from research and practice. Joseph Rowntree Foundation

¹² Boyce, C. Walkability, Social Inclusion, Isolation and Street Re-design. AECOM ANZ

“Like many fine buildings of the past, Highbury Gardens will stand the test of time; retaining its presence and elegance for years to come.”

ELLIOT LIPTON, MANAGING DIRECTOR, FIRST BASE



HIGHBURY GARDENS

DEVELOPER: First Base

PROJECT PARTNERS: Homes and Communities Agency, Southern Housing Group

ARCHITECT: Porphyrios Associates

AWARDS RECEIVED: Best New Place to Live (London Planning Awards, 2012), Best Affordable Housing Project (London Evening Standard New Homes Award, 2012), Best Design For 4 Storeys or More (Housebuilder Awards, 2012)

HOUSING: 119 units (42% affordable housing)



UK IN FOCUS

Much of the research around social exclusion and the built environment in the UK has focused on housing form, particularly that of multi-storey housing estates.

SOCIAL EXCLUSION EXACERBATED THROUGH HOUSING DESIGN

The last ‘re-housing’ boom in England, during the 1960s and 1970s, saw the rise of the multi-storey estate. Problems of scale have plagued many of these developments- from disjunction with local contexts, to underused common spaces to an uncomfortable relationship with the street, characterised by set-backs and fences. The negative impacts on residents, both physical and psychological, of the legacy of poor design, construction and management of Britain’s last housing boom has dominated contemporary housing concerns. The relative ‘ghettoisation’ of estates has continued to inform wider built environment inequality across the UK.

From the period between the early 1950s and 1980, 1.5 million homes¹³ were demolished around the UK, many replaced by poorly conceived mass housing. This period of demolition also resulted in the destruction of a certain degree of street fabric. While those demolished houses had been oriented along streets, the new multi-storey estates were often oriented around large ‘communal’ spaces, which over time would prove underused and often neglected.

Research on multi-storey estates across the capital reveals a set of deep flaws. Poor quality buildings, poor use of space, poor maintenance and poor integration with surrounding areas all contribute to the dissatisfaction of tenants and unpopularity of the type across numerous housing preference studies. Studies show that even with socio-economic conditions held equal, multi-storey housing is associated with a number of poor social outcomes.¹⁴ While costly maintenance, high service levies and high rents can produce extremely high-quality, desirable living spaces, London’s history of multi-storey estates has cast a dubious light as to the appropriateness of these housing forms for the majority of the population. Social tenants make up 21% of all households in Britain, but 79% of those live on the 5th floor or above, and children in social housing are 16 times more likely to live on or above the 5th floor than children not in social housing.

The poor quality of so many estates built during the 1960s has been proven time and time again, with problems of insulation, damp, poor light and other maintenance issues having plagued residents for decades. The poor assembly of many of these estate buildings was compounded by the use of a system of prefabricated concrete panels, which were stretched beyond their means through building tower blocks to heights beyond which the panels were intended for.

The unpopularity of the built form of many post-war estates, both with tenants of the estates, and with wider society, has endured across the last five decades. The resulting backlash led to something of a slowdown in multi-storey developments across the country- with only six buildings with a height over 35m being built in Britain between 1979 and 1998 . London has seen something of a return to high-rise development in the past decade- but rather than in the form of estates with provisions for social housing, London’s new high-rises are glittering towers of exclusivity and luxury living. They are out of the reach of the average Londoners, and are unsuitable to the needs of many households. New development in London risks perpetuating ghettoisation, carving out more and more areas of the city which cater only to higher income residents.

HIGHBURY GARDENS

Our Highbury Gardens development in London stands against these trends, proving that new housing can be provided which caters to a variety of residents across income streams, which fits well into its local context and which speaks to London’s historic mid-rise form.

¹³ Banham, J. (Sir), Graef, R., Faulkner, K. and McDonald, M. (Dame). 2012. Future Homes Commission:

¹⁴ Boys Smith, N. & Morton, A., 2013. Create Streets: Not just multi-storey estates. Create Streets report

CONCLUSION

The challenge of overcoming isolation and deepening social connectedness in our cities and towns requires holistic, long-term approaches. Our work across the world has shown that the quality our built environments has a deep impact on our quality of life. Places that are collaboratively designed with the community that they are meant to serve produce spaces that are more inclusive, foster a sense of belonging and are ultimately more sustainable.

Research into the relationship between the built environment and social inclusion suggests that the way we design our streets, houses and public spaces can have a profound effect on how people perceive and experience inclusion or exclusion in a given community. In general, walkable streets, mixed use neighbourhoods, accessible public spaces and the provision of quality, affordable housing all work together to provide opportunities for enhanced community connectedness and help to build strong, resilient communities.

As our urban populations continue to grow, we need to focus our efforts on ensuring that the places we are building support inclusive, harmonious neighbourhoods which in turn build thriving, resilient cities.

SUPPORTING US

If you want to support us, it's easy to get involved. Just visit our website at www.princes-foundation.org/support-us email us at enquiry@princes-foundation.org or call us on 020 7613 8584

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