



All-Party Parliamentary Group
on Building Communities

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Call for Evidence and Contributions





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The APPG on Building Community exists to promote the importance that infrastructure plays in connecting communities together and in facilitating our ability to interact in public spaces. The APPG seek to raise awareness on the social benefits of well-designed infrastructure and public spaces through engagement with infrastructure clients, industry and political stakeholders.

As part of its remit, the APPG seeks to conduct research on the concept of 'placemaking' and investigate design practices that maximise the social value of infrastructure. In this way the APPG will build an evidence base that can be used by policy makers when engaging with the built and natural environment.

The Placemaking Concept and Building Community

Infrastructure is the fabric of society that binds our community together. It strengthens the connection between people and the places we share, and through these connections we create a community. The placemaking concept acknowledges this connection in building a community and seeks to inspire people to maximise the benefits of these connections by collectively improving public spaces.

The placemaking concept argues that destinations give a community an identity and image. Successful destinations are made up of multiple places where people have 'something to do' or activities that attract people. Synergy is created from these places within a destination and is how a town or a city can transform.

As placemaking has a focus on the people who use a public space, an important aspect of the concept is collaborating with end users when developing the infrastructure and public spaces to meet their needs. Successful infrastructure and public spaces are not off the shelf solutions, and instead require engagement with impacted stakeholders to unearth the needs of a community and to develop a shared vision for what is being developed. Through a collaborative approach, people will be become more invested in infrastructure and enablers for developments aligning to the shared vision of a community.

While the economic benefits of infrastructure and public space are important considerations for projects, it is also critical to consider the social benefits to a community at all stages of the decision-making process. Well-designed infrastructure and public space can increase interactions between people and can lead to trust, shared understanding and shared values within a community. These outcomes naturally improve an individual's quality of life and the cohesion of a community.

Placemaking and Productivity

We all recognise that the UK has a productivity gap that is a drag on our economic performance. Despite being the most productive economy in Europe in the 1960's the UK has steadily fallen behind France, Germany and the United States. Within the UK, there is a 44% difference between the most and least productive cities. To combat this decline, the Government has launched the Industrial Strategy at a national level to help bridge the gap.

The APPG feel, however, that there is a local dimension to improving UK productivity that requires a greater focus on the role of the built environment. Our belief is that the UK needs to make productivity a more tangible part of the planning and design process at this local level to achieve improved economic results.

More needs to be done to understand how places that are designed and delivered with space, health, accessibility, resilience and engagement in mind can be more productive places, driving inclusive growth with better economic and social outcomes across a city, region, nation, or the whole UK.



Recent studies have emerged showing the effects that urbanisation can have on productivity. There is increasingly solid evidence that cities offer opportunities to raise labour productivity through a greater concentration of people and economic activities that drive financial benefits. While urban densification can lead to economic benefits, the process is not automatic, especially if growth is not well managed. For example, poorly planned and designed urban areas can lead to poor-quality buildings, congestion, overloaded public transit, air pollution, health impacts, inflexibility and poor infrastructure for basic services such as energy, water and waste. These problems reduce productivity for individuals, businesses and government services.

Creating areas that are aesthetically appealing, have good connectivity and are comfortable provides individuals with the opportunity to use the space most effectively. The interaction that happens in these spaces is also a key driver of a successful service economy, boosting productivity through access to knowledge and networks of people. Talented individuals working for highly productive industries, such as technology firms, are more likely to move to an attractive city or development.

Call for Evidence

The APPG is calling for evidence and contributions from any and all organisations with an interest in the built and natural environment to help answer this fundamental question. Your responses will form an evidence base for a report to be published later in the year on:

How Placemaking can lead to Greater Productivity.

In light of this, we are asking contributors to consider the following question

1. Do you consider that well designed places that take note of placemaking principles are more productive places?
 - a. If so, please provide evidence that supports your contention.
2. How can we better demonstrate and advance the idea that place matter to people and economies?
3. How does the design of our urban environment maximise the desire of people to interact with each other?
4. What role does or should the public realm play economically in local planning policy?
5. Is there a role for greater use of strategic planning to promote productivity?
6. What do you consider the key drivers of productivity to be?
7. Do local authorities currently understand the real implications of non-resilient infrastructure on social cohesion and local economic activity?
8. What financial and policy structures are in place to secure a productive development strategy and to ensure long-term management of a place?
9. What commitments are in place to establish meaningful engagement, such as publishing engagement performance results for each development?
10. How can local planning policy support community ownership of development?

How to Respond.

This consultation will run until the **14 June**.

Please make sure your responses **reach us by 5:30pm on the 14 June**.

All responses to be sent to Ayushi Sinha at asinha@acenet.co.uk