

Place Alliance

a draft prospectus

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The Place Alliance is committed to ensuring the quality of human settlements in England. Its member organisations have put aside their sectoral, organisational and geographical differences to advocate for 'Place Quality' across the country. It was established following debates on 'Place Leadership' in 2014. This prospectus sets out the founding principles and core objectives of the Place Alliance in England, its shared vision of Place Quality, its purposes, and how it operates.

Founding principles

The Place Alliance was established to enable the 'sector' of built environment professions and the diverse organisations who influence Place Quality:

- to regularly meet and discuss matters, which cut across their different focus of interest; and
- to promote ongoing national debate about Place Quality.

and to ensure:

- that there is a collective national voice on questions of Place Quality; and
- that throughout England the value and importance of Place Quality is consistently and repeatedly asserted.

The core objectives of the Place Alliance are therefore:

- Facilitating cross-sector discussion and debate around place quality in a constructive, collaborative and yet challenging manner
- Providing a powerful collective voice on questions of place quality – safeguarding, enhancing, and enriching
- Working across the sector to take on a greater collective responsibility for place leadership, alongside national government.

Defining 'places'

Places are made up of the 'public' built environment, and its communities. Each place is unique and there is a great diversity and richness across the country. They include:

- The urban, suburban and rural built environment;
- Everyday places as well as historic and extraordinary places;
- Existing and new places;

- All places with a 'public' function regardless of ownership;
- Key civic buildings and spaces, such as schools, libraries, squares, parks, and streets;
- Infrastructure, such as drainage, roads and public transport; and
- The relationship between private buildings and the public built environment and the impact of the former on the latter.

The Place Alliance is committed to ensuring quality across this multiplicity of places, with their diverse uses, functions and communities. Our organisations are responsible for all the processes of shaping places, and by working more consistently and constructively together we can seek to optimise place quality through processes that are:

- Both strategic and local in nature
- Top-down and bottom-up and both professionally and community driven
- Directly and indirectly shaping places (both projects and policies, for example)
- Concerned with the environmental, social and economic wellbeing of places and people
- Involving a wide and varied range of professionals.

A Vision of Place Quality

The success of a place will depend on how it performs and the processes through which it is shaped. In terms of performance, Place Quality is seen in:

- livability, which means places suited to active, healthy, and fulfilled lives for the whole community throughout their lifetimes
- character, through the conspicuous care of appearance, functionality and the general quality of places
- diversity, via social cohesion and the positive impact of place on the quality of life of communities
- economic viability of local development, including economic performance generally
- reduced costs to government of health care, social care, and crime and disorder

And in terms of the place shaping processes, Place Quality is seen where there is:

- a sustainable approach to development, including

- reducing the costs to society of congestion, energy, and pollution,
- using low-carbon transport modes, and
- conserving natural and man-made resources.
- adaption for / adaptability to social, demographic, environmental, climactic, economic and technological changes
- focus on acceptability of new development to communities and how concerns about future impacts on existing neighbourhoods are addressed
- an emphasis on measures for social justice with equitable access, affordable costs of living and community influence over changes that affect them
- a drive to raise aspirations, expectations, and demand for better quality design.

Purposes of the Place Alliance

Following on from its core objectives, the Place Alliance will:

- encourage stakeholders from all built environment disciplines to engage regularly with their counterparts in allied disciplines to discuss the place agenda
- provide a hub which can:
 - join-up thinking across disciplines and groups
 - share insights from all of the regions in England
 - connect with the three other countries of the UK
- act as a central point to coordinate existing smaller networks, best practice, knowledge and innovation, and resources
- encourage its constituent organisations in addressing place quality, and in communicating their successes in working to promote Place Quality
- include and constructively engage those who work directly in places, particularly Local Authorities, but also, importantly, local community groups and other policy stakeholders
- advocate for a better public understanding of Place Quality and promote the value of local community involvement in place shaping
- continually campaign for national and local resources to deliver the place agenda
- seek to influence government thinking on place issues and to continually focus its attention on Place Quality
- instigate and / or endorse, critique, and provide guidance on high level policy

The Place Alliance will determine priority areas for specific activities from its member organisations taking into account:

- our core objectives
- our shared vision of Place Quality
- the national picture and regional place agendas

Operational Principles

The Place Alliance operates in three key ways to provide place leadership that reflects the perspectives of its wide range of member organisations but that remains responsive to changing needs and agendas. Firstly, it offers a strong central point of intelligent coordination of multiple, diverse organisations, many of whom lead in their own areas. We embrace the communication opportunities of new media in doing this. Secondly, it comprises place professionals who are active across the English regions, and can actively seek out and support leadership 'on the ground' in local places. Thirdly we have agreed a set of shared operational principles that underpin our operations. These are:

- Integrity and fairness – treating the concerns of all members of the Alliance fairly, equally and with respect, and particularly with regards to regional representation
- Being collaborative – coordinating and supporting to seek commonality and to avoid unnecessary competition or duplication of effort across the great diversity of existing place organisations
- Openness – working in an open and transparent manner that seeks to include diverse partners and encourages participation
- Independence – not beholden to or overly reliant on any external source or any constituent members
- Providing challenge – exposing and confronting poor practice where it exists, and actively encouraging all development and industry interests, public and private, to take the place quality agenda seriously
- Innovating and leading – working to provide a clear 'national voice' on place that is proactively engaged with all key parties active in shaping the built environment