

LEEDS SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GROUP

THE LEEDS SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GROUP CHARTER*

Key Objectives

The Leeds Sustainable Development Group seeks to promote the following objectives, which should be at the forefront of every responsible urban development project:

- The conservation of identity, the strengthening of neighbourhood and the encouragement of cultural diversity and distinctiveness.
- The expansion of the public transport system and its interconnection with existing and new developments.
- The wise use of resources, the minimisation of additional land-take and the encouragement of moderate degrees of urban density.
- The safeguarding and interconnection of green spaces and networks working towards quality standards and the conservation of public spaces.
- The assurance of social harmony and the advancement of social and functional interaction.
- The safeguarding of existing jobs and the creation of new and innovative ones.
- The advancement of a culture of discourse.
- The creation of long-term partnerships between the community and the public and private sectors.
- The participation in life-long learning processes – seeing urban life in its wider context.

The Leeds Sustainable Development Group believe that economics, ecology, education, culture and the fundamental structure of society need to be re-examined carefully in addressing these **Key Objectives**. The early participation of the citizen and the integration of regional networks are essential to this process.

The future model for planning new urban settlements should be the 'Compact City'. This is a concept consisting of independently functioning units, in which the aspects of everyday life can be laid out and accessed within walking distance by all members of society. The 'City of the Future' is a city of social and functional integration, cultural diversity, accessible education, resource conservation and regional dialogue. When regeneration or outward growth is unavoidable or imperative for economic or cultural reasons, the principle of the 'Compact City' should be followed.

The following **12 principles** are intended to provide the point of departure for the 'Compact City' and as such serve as the foundation for the 'Sustainable City'. They should be applied to all new development.

Spatial

1 Diversity, Safety and Tolerance

- Encouragement of a balanced age and social profile within functioning neighbourhoods, with the provision of appropriate workplaces for all sectors of the population and the encouragement of innovative residential models.
- The provision of facilities in public and private infrastructure for all generations with the provision of well-managed places balanced with free spaces.
- The provision of a full range of facilities, especially for very young and very old citizens.
- The integration of all strands of society irrespective of ethnicity, gender or age.

2 City of Neighbourhoods

- Decentralised governance, with a defined degree of empowerment and personal responsibility, is indispensable for cities and should be actively encouraged.
- Decentralised governance is of particular importance in: residential living and working, social infrastructure, education and culture, recreation and management of green spaces and networks.
- The protection of city's identity is a precondition for sustainable urban planning and development.

3 City of Short Distances

- Existing facilities should be enhanced and new ones introduced in such a way that they are in accordance with the idea of the Compact City.
- Accessibility to all infrastructure networks on foot minimises car traffic and leads to an improvement in environmental quality.
- The development of public transport and pedestrian and bicycle networks should be given priority over the use of private motor vehicles.

4 Public Transport and Density

- Public transport needs to be closely integrated with the urban design vision and, as a general principle, must always be given priority over car traffic. Increased urban density along public transport routes should be brought about in a sensitive and sustainable manner.
- Land uses with civic function and high frequency of use should be located in close proximity to public transportation nodes in order to increase urban intensity.

Content

5 Education, Science & Culture

- Schools and universities, research facilities and cultural institutions make significant impact on the attractiveness and the quality of a city. They have a strong influence on public life and can have a decisive influence on the planning culture of a city.
- A city has to create opportunities for personal development and life-long learning.

6 Industry and Jobs

- The most important task for the future is the conservation of existing employment and the development of groundbreaking and innovative businesses. In order to achieve this, we must fully tap into every opportunity that enables the city to maintain existing jobs on the one hand, and to develop new ones on the other.
- The trend to Greenfield development and 'edge city' has to be counteracted with a concentration on the regeneration of existing urban fabric. The proper application of these principles is indispensable.

7 Nature and Environment

- The conservation of biological diversity, the wise use of resource for the benefit of future generations and the protection of a health and liveable environment are key objectives for urban development.
- All areas of planning have to be evaluated for their impact on the environment prior to implementation, in order to safeguard the habitats of animals and plants as well as historically-important cultural landscapes.

8 Design Quality

- Most planning decisions shape the appearance of the city for generations. These decisions must therefore support and enhance the character of a city by promoting the highest qualities of design.
- Public spaces play a key role: together with their neighbouring buildings they form the public face of a city.
- Public property rights and the authority for disposal of public space must remain with the body politic in order to mediate between different interests and to counteract undesirable development.
- The development of key building projects has to be led by the planning authority from initial concept through to realisation on the ground.
- Tools such as architectural design competitions, multiple commissioning and expert panels should be employed as a general principle, in order to find solutions for important buildings and public spaces.
- The structure of the plot plan – as a starting point for diversity – plays a very important role.
- Processes of urban redevelopment will be of special importance in the future.

Process

9 Long-Term Vision

- Consistent urban planning and development needs to follow a unifying vision that refers back to the city's past and projects forward several decades.
- The face of the city must not be submitted to short-lived fashions or political whim. Additions to cities that have evolved over historical timeframes must anticipate the needs of future generations (conserve the old and celebrate the new). Only in this way can the uniqueness and the character of a city be developed, maintained and enhanced.
- Continuity, quality and awareness of the intricacies of a location are important attributes for a sustainable, future-orientated city.

10 Communication and Participation

- Communities must work continuously on their collective vision for the city through public discourse that becomes manifest in public spaces and in city culture.
- Continuous communication must be supported among the protagonists and stakeholders inside and outside the city administration. The outputs should be fed directly into planning processes to help create transparency and to inform political decisions.
- All parts of a city's population must be invited to participate, co-operate and engage through appropriate modes of communication – in all phases of development from initial visioning through to detailed planning, delivery and management.
- A culture of engagement should be established, employing a wide range of techniques available to central, regional and local authorities.

11 Reliability, Obligation and Fairness

- A citywide concept, with principles of consensus, creates the proper environment within which all the participants in urban development can act with equal rights.
- In order for the city to become a reliable partner for all citizens and investors, urban policy needs to be founded on basic resolutions that have a binding effect on the city administration.
- Basic principles need to govern site development guidelines and standards of sustainable construction. Guidelines such as the City of Short Distances have to be enshrined in subject-specified policies – such as the retail concepts embodied in Freiburg's marketplaces and sub-centres. These principles should be made legally binding through development masterplans.
- A level of trust should be created between the protagonists within the city's administration and those outside, based on continuity and with sufficient freedom to enable innovation and creativity to flourish.

12 Co-operation & Partnership

- Co-operation and participation serve to distribute and share the burden of complexity of urban planning and development with many.
- Financial support for projects creates incentives for investors and can also serve to guide them.

- Exemplary action by the community with regard to urban design can stimulate private action and also help to initiate self-fulfilling processes.
- Agreements and contracts with stakeholders, the support of – as well as the demand for – citizen communities, all make wide-ranging urban redevelopment processes possible.
- Scientific institutions, universities, industry and professional bodies are important players in innovative development.

* With full acknowledgement to the 'Freiburg Charter for Sustainable Urbanism'.