

## Written evidence submitted by the Town and Country Planning Association (PHS0110)

### 1 About the TCPA

The TCPA (Town and Country Planning Association) works to challenge, inspire and support people to create healthy, sustainable and resilient places that are fair for everyone. The TCPA has worked with Public Health England, universities and more than 60 councils to help planners and public health experts collaborate to create healthier places. We contributed to NHS England's Healthy New Towns project.

### 2 Why planning policy should be considered as part of the Prevention Inquiry

We recommend the Committee considers the role of national planning policy in supporting population health and preventing ill health.

It is widely assumed that the NHS creates good health and that a healthy place is one with lots of GPs and hospitals. However, evidence demonstrates that although the NHS is good at 'mending' people when they become ill, what keeps people healthy are the places and communities in which they live<sup>1</sup>. Estimates suggest around 70% of the causes of good health lie outside the NHS. Good homes, clean air, jobs, parks and green spaces, and trusted friends and neighbours are all important determinants of population health.

Planning shapes the places in which people live, and so shapes their ability to live healthy lives. There is a strong argument that national planning policy should be considered one of the 'determinants of health'. Speaking at the TCPA's conference in 2022, the Chief Medical Officer, Prof Chris Whitty, said, 'If you look back over the last 150 years, more has been done for public health by proper planning than almost any other intervention (except, perhaps, vaccination).'

The evidence about how to plan and design places that support good population health is strong: see Public Health England's 'Spatial Planning for Health – an evidence review'. **We know what healthy places are like: the question is how to make them happen.**

### 3 Why the Committee should look at this now

In England, all planning policy and practice is shaped by the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). However, it is not until paragraph 91 that the NPPF mentions health. The government (DLUHC) says it will undertake a fundamental review of the NPPF later in 2023. There is an opportunity for the Committee to make an evidenced-based case to DLUHC that national planning policy should be updated to prioritise supporting population health.

Also, the Levelling Up Bill, going through parliament, proposes 12 cross-cutting 'missions' that all government departments will help deliver. Two are:

**Health:** By 2030, the gap in Healthy Life Expectancy (HLE) between local areas where it is highest and lowest will have narrowed, and by 2035 HLE will rise by five years.

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<sup>1</sup> See, for instance, Crisp, N. 'Health is made at home: hospitals are for repairs'. Salus (2020)

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**Well-being:** By 2030, well-being will have improved in every area of the UK, with the gap between top performing and other areas closing.

It is difficult to see how these missions will be achieved unless planning policy is re-focused to maximise its role in supporting population health.

#### **4 Why this area would benefit from scrutiny**

The government recently announced it will not go ahead with the Health Disparities White Paper. The White Paper would have created an opportunity for a cross-departmental approach to prevention. By including planning policy in the Inquiry, the Committee could help ensure this important determinant of health is strengthened.

#### **5 Why the government needs to take action in this area**

As the pandemic recedes, it is clear the UK is struggling with poor health far more than comparable countries. In 2022 Andy Haldane, former Bank of England economist, gave a lecture called 'Health is Wealth'. 'People reporting as long-term sick have risen by about a third since 2010,' says Haldane. 'Around 17%, or 1 in every 6 UK workers now report as long-term sick. These are staggeringly high levels of reported ill-health.' Haldane suggests a number of policy areas in which investment could support better population health: one of them is 'placemaking', which is itself determined by planning policy.

England now lags behind both Scotland and Wales: both have national planning policies that explicitly state the role of planning in supporting population health and in supporting the reduction of health inequalities<sup>2</sup>.

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<sup>2</sup> For Scotland see National Planning Framework 4; for Wales see Future Wales: the national plan 2040 and Planning Policy Wales.

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