

Policy for Designed Living Environment



Article no: Ku18:06

Print: Elanders 2018

Production: Ministry of Culture

Photo: © Ewa Stackelberg Title: Fotogram 3. From the series: Summertime (2014)

Policy for Designed Living Environment

The Government Bill “Policy for Designed Living Environment” (Bill 2017/18:110) takes an integrated approach to the work on the designed living environment while also providing a comprehensive national architecture policy. The aim is to make the very most of what architecture and design can bring to the development of society, for the benefit and enjoyment of all. This is important for social progress and requires increased awareness and clear ambition on the part of all decision-makers.

Architecture and design affect us all on a daily basis and are, ultimately, about our quality of life. The aim is to put people’s needs at the centre of society’s development, enabling more people to live in inclusive, well-designed environments that are sustainable in the long term. A designed living environment approach entails a holistic view of the shaping of our physical environment in which architecture and design are seen as one cohesive sphere.

With that perspective as our point of departure, we shape our environment on the basis of people and their needs. This perspective incorporates not just architecture and design but also art, historical contexts and social values.

The value that can be created through architecture and design have been actively exploited in our country for a long time. The evolution of the Swedish welfare

state and of a society for all has achieved one of its clearest expressions in the way we have designed our living environment. We must now build on this solid foundation and progress this work further by creating designed living environments of the highest quality that will meet new needs that are arising in society. Societal progress requires new thinking about how we should design our environments to ensure people feel both stimulated and comfortable. The key requirements are quality, attractiveness and sustainability. The public sector is a major influence on how we shape our environment, but responsibility for developments in architecture and design is shared by many.

The designed living environment impacts several policy areas from different perspectives, which calls for an awareness of the importance of architecture and design issues within the areas involved. Areas

may include community planning, housing, culture and public art, the environment, social issues, education, research, transport, trade, and accessibility and consumer policy, all of which, in one way or another, have a clear impact on – and are clearly affected by – how buildings, facilities, products, services and systems are designed.

Designing a sustainable living environment is about organising complex and sometimes conflicting interests into a whole. However, the opportunities that design can offer are often to be found within those very limitations. It is the task of the architect, designer or, in certain cases, the artist, to lead the process, using their specific professional skills. It is essential that the appropriate conditions are in place for this work if societal progress is to be characterised by creativity and artistic quality.

Quality, attractiveness and sustainability

Quality in architecture and design means creating value, not just for the commissioner and the user but also for the wider community and future generations. Safeguarding quality is a constant challenge in social development, where there needs to be interaction between differing points of view.

Well-designed, functional environments, with prominent aesthetic and artistic values and solid materials, will increase people's sense of comfort and thus their quality of life. The living environment, and particularly our housing, is of fundamental importance to our health and well-being.

High-quality design is an investment in all aspects of sustainability. Giving precedence to short-term financial issues over other concerns jeopardises fundamental values in people's lives and equally the long-term sustainability of society, not least in terms of our ability to achieve an ecological balance. A design process in which environmental perspectives are at the forefront can reap huge benefits in the form of efficient use of energy and resources, choices of materials that are not a burden on the natural environment and everyday living environments free of hazardous chemical substances.

A feeling of belonging and pride in a shared environment helps to build a society that sticks together. The design of the built environment is, therefore, a social equality issue. Purposeful work with architecture and design can help to break down segregation and even out socioeconomic differences. This requires careful, long-term planning of cities and communities, both at the macro and the micro level, and high-quality design for each individual building and place.

The physical environment must provide for people's needs, but for many people it is often a limiting factor, for instance due to physical barriers or an absence of security. Careful design of the environment can combat various types of inequality and physical barriers, thus helping to bring about a more gender-equal and equitable society.

In the democratic processes of urban planning and construction that are so important, the perspectives of children and young people are vital. Children's life chances can be improved if they grow up in a good built environment and, correspondingly, made worse if the environment they grow up in is a poor one. It is therefore hugely important that children and young people have access

to the environments they need for their development. What is required is inclusive work in which children and young people should have a role and influence. Decisions about the designed living environment that affect children and young people should have their best interests at heart.

High-quality architectural and design work will also underpin an innovative enterprise sector that can help to strengthen the economy. In this context too, architecture and design are a significant resource for the development of a society that is sustainable in the long term.

Architecture and design objective

At a time when environmental concerns and climate change are increasingly making themselves felt, where it is now more important than it has been for some time to safeguard a living democracy, where new patterns of living mean that people have new needs to be met and where migration, continued urbanisation and technological developments both impose new demands and provide new opportunities, the objectives for the spheres of architecture and design are in need of renewal. Issues regarding architecture and design are crucial to social development due to the huge impact of the designed environment on people's everyday lives. Purposeful, carefully

thought-out architecture and design can help promote positive societal progress and improved quality of life for people in all parts of the country. However, in order to ensure that the values that architecture and design can contribute are realised, it is important to be aware that these art forms naturally also have intrinsic value.

At the same time, it is vital that many people are knowledgeable about the designed living environment and the factors that determine how it develops and that there is a comprehensive, dynamic public debate about what is built and produced and about how our environments, urban

and rural areas, public spaces, housing and surrounding features are designed, function and affect individuals. All this is important for the development of democracy.

The national objective – an overriding objective and six clarifying criteria – steers central government initiatives in respect of the designed living environment, architecture and design and can serve as guidance for municipalities and county councils. The objective and its clarifying criteria complement other national objectives relating to the designed living environment. The new objective and criteria has been adopted by the Riksdag (the Swedish Parliament).

National objective for architecture and design policy

Architecture and design will help to create a sustainable, equitable and less segregated society with carefully designed living environments in which everyone is well placed to influence the development of their shared environment. This will be achieved by ensuring that:

- sustainability and quality are not made subservient to short-term financial considerations;
- knowledge in the fields of architecture and design is developed and disseminated;
- the public sector acts as a role model;
- aesthetic, artistic and cultural assets are preserved and developed;
- environments are designed to be accessible for all; and
- cooperation and collaboration are developed both nationally and internationally.

1

Sustainability and quality are not made subservient to short-term financial considerations

The environments that are created are designed to meet the needs of people in their everyday lives. They are places where people will not just reside and work but will also live their lives. Careful design work will create values that are of great importance for people's health and quality of life but will also enhance sustainability over time. New buildings and sites that are created today are likely to be in place for several generations. Our aim should be to ensure that they instil feelings of pride both in those who plan, build and manage them and also in those who will reside, work and live there, now and in the future. Investing in good quality reaps benefits, not just by providing better environments for individuals and the community but also on purely financial grounds, since the long-term cost of managing the built environment will be lower. The public sector – municipalities, county councils and central government – whose role it is to represent the public interest shoulders considerable responsibility for this perspective. Everything that is built or designed has an impact on how we manage all the various aspects of sustainability. Professional architectural and design work enhances our overall ability to identify solutions to many of the challenges we face in achieving societal progress, whether financial, environmental or social. It is therefore essential that the emphasis is on sustainability and quality. Starting from the perspective of the designed living environment, architecture and design can make an active contribution to the work of countering segregation. Methods developed in the context of design processes can help increase inclusion and democratic participation.

2

Knowledge in the fields of architecture and design will be developed and disseminated

Higher education and research in the fields of architecture and design are vital if our work on sustainable designed living environments is to evolve. It is essential that knowledge in these areas is openly accessible and possible to process. Architecture and design are also fields in which practical knowledge, experience and judgement are key. The development of practical skills is very important both in ensuring that knowledge is built up around specific issues and matters of urgency and in enhancing the ability of practitioners to develop positive solutions in discussion with commissioners and users. The design of our environment is undeniably a complex and multifaceted knowledge area. It is suggested in many cases that it is a lack of expertise that causes decisions that lead to failures in function, sustainability and design. The breadth of the knowledge area means that no one actor can master its entire scope, so it will be important to develop methods for establishing and maintaining creative collaboration between relevant actors.

3

The public sector will act as a role model

Central government has a number of roles in which it must act as a role model – not least as a developer and property manager. Municipalities and county councils should act as role models when commissioning public environments, in construction projects and when managing property to ensure the design and management of high-quality environments with all-round sustainability. Municipalities also have a particular responsibility to act as role models when creating public spaces and determining the location of municipal facilities. The public sector is also collectively the country's biggest employer and should therefore act in exemplary fashion when designing work environments. Public bodies can also be trailblazers and demonstrate possible avenues for innovation. Innovation is essential for sustainable development and strengthens both public bodies and businesses delivering goods and services to those bodies. A purposeful procurement process within the public sector is fundamental to ensuring quality and sustainability. Exemplary procurement can promote both efficiency and development by introducing innovation and new solutions.

Aesthetic, artistic and cultural assets are to be preserved and developed

Architecture and design are important cultural expressions and art forms. The constant interaction between people and their surroundings is an important aspect of our everyday lives, although one that is often not paid enough attention. The inclusion of aesthetic considerations makes a difference – if introduced conscientiously and with care, they can create positive values for people and society. Art has a key role to play if we are to create public spaces of long-term quality, and so it is important that artistic input is incorporated into social development processes at an early stage. When society evolves quickly, it is important to ensure that the built environment can be both preserved and developed. Aesthetic and cultural values are very significant for the development of sustainable and attractive environments in which to live. A holistic approach to the designed living environment also includes the management, maintenance and care of existing buildings. The history and context of a society is to a large extent embodied in its built and designed environment. A person's feelings of belonging and security in a particular place are to do with relationships with the people there but also with being familiar with the environment and trusting in its permanence.

Environments are to be designed to be accessible for all

With purposeful, well thought-out architecture and design, the designed living environment can help to create a community that is fully inclusive. The aim should therefore be to make systematic use of the principles of Universal Design that will ensure that environments, products and services function for people of all ages and abilities.

Cooperation and collaboration are to be developed both nationally and internationally

In order to benefit from the potential of architecture and design as tools for social development, we need to be able to establish cross-sector perspectives and consider the bigger picture. This is largely a matter of managing conflicting objectives in creative processes. Many actors share responsibility for the designed living environment and for ensuring that work in this area is continuously evolving. These include municipalities, county administrative boards and a number of national government agencies and other government funded bodies whose work directly or indirectly interfaces with architecture, design and the designed living environment. A large number of businesses, organisations and other bodies are also active in this context. Other important actors are universities and colleges. All the above should strive to cooperate and collaborate so that they can, together, manage the complexities inherent in developing the designed living environment. A globalised world means cooperation, sharing and expertise that transcend national borders. International contact and cooperation promote and develop all areas of society, and this is particularly the case with architecture and design where interaction of this kind is often essential for progress.

Initiatives to realise sustainable designed living environments

Concerted action for sustainable designed environments

Concerted action for sustainable designed living environments through broader and enhanced expertise in the spheres of architecture and design is needed. Responsible authorities must have sound knowledge of the various actors in these areas and help develop stronger networks. They will also need in-depth knowledge of regulatory frameworks and processes and of aesthetics and design so as to provide support to the actors concerned. It is therefore important that the National Board of Housing, Building and Planning, ArkDes (the Swedish Centre for Architecture and Design), the Swedish National Heritage Board and Public Art Agency Sweden work together to stimulate the development of sustainable designed living environments by developing methodologies and disseminating good practice. The National Board of Housing, Building and Planning will have a coordinating role in this context.

Extended remit for the National Board of Housing, Building and Planning

There is a need for a clearer, collective responsibility for coordination, skills support and promotional initiatives for public bodies in the fields of architecture and the designed

living environment at national, regional and local level, with the aim, amongst other things, of helping to ensure that architecture throughout the country is of high quality. The National Board of Housing, Building and Planning has been commissioned to strengthen its efforts regarding architecture and designed living environment. As part of the remit the Board will coordinate and initiate efforts on how government agencies can contribute to increased architectural quality as well as having a facilitating and guiding capacity regarding the tools affecting architecture and planning on a municipal level.

Central government as a role model

Government agencies are expected to act as role models in helping to achieve sustainable designed living environments.

As government agencies managing property, the Swedish Fortifications Agency, the Swedish Environmental Protection Agency, the Swedish Maritime Administration, the National Property Board of Sweden, Svenska Kraftnät (the state-owned electricity authority) and the Swedish Transport Administration have a particular responsibility in their respective contexts. The work of these agencies is therefore to be monitored.

The environments and properties under the control of central government impact substantially on many people's day-to-day lives. It is essential that the architecture and design work that affects everyday life is developed and managed in the best way possible. Aside from its duties as a property manager, central government has other roles in which it can act as a role model in the context of design.

Procurement

In order to achieve the best possible value when procuring goods, services or contractors, the contracting authority or unit should address all quality dimensions in a professional manner.

Contracting authorities and units need continued support in this in respect of architecture and design. Because of this, and within the context of their enhanced collaboration, the National Board of Housing, Building and Planning, the Swedish Centre for Architecture and Design, the Swedish National Heritage Board and Public Art Agency Sweden should aim to work towards greater exploitation of the quality dimensions of architecture and design in public procurement processes. This work will be undertaken alongside the National Agency for Public Procurement.

Public spaces

Public environments are important, shared social spaces that are crucial for the day-to-day lives of many people. An example of such a space that both affects and is important for many people is health care environments. The National Board of Housing, Building and Planning has therefore been charged with gathering information about how to achieve a high level of architectural quality in the planning, building, furnishing, operation and management of health care environments and, on the basis of this, to produce guidance for municipalities, county councils and the private actors concerned.

Spaces for children and young people

Decisions about the designed living environment that affect

children and young people should have their best interests at heart. The National Board of Housing, Building and Planning has therefore been charged with producing guidance for municipalities and other providers on high-quality, accessible and sustainable design of the physical environments of schools and preschools, both indoor and outdoor.

Cultural assets

A policy on architecture and design can help to preserve, use and develop a variety of cultural sites if such sites are viewed as the starting point for the design of the environment. A designed living environment perspective means taking a holistic approach that will include cultural heritage and cultural sites as a matter of course. The Swedish National

Heritage Board has been given the task of gathering and reporting information about, and positive examples of, ways in which cultural assets can be integrated and preserved in planning and building processes.

Art in shared environments

Public Art Agency Sweden aims to promote greater knowledge of the role of public art in the shaping of shared environments to enable the interaction of art, architecture and design in various newbuild or redevelopment projects. The work will be undertaken in partnership with other agencies affected. It should include providing support to local, independent art bodies that work on public engagement in respect of the design of shared environments.

Quality in architecture and design means creating value, not just for the commissioner and the user but also for the wider community and future generations.

Other initiatives that contribute to sustainable designed living environments

The 2030 Agenda and the New Urban Agenda

The year 2015 saw 17 Sustainable Development Goals being adopted – the 2030 Agenda. Several of the goals relate to housing and land issues, of which Goal 11 aims to make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable. The New Urban Agenda that was adopted in 2016 constitutes a framework for global work on sustainable urban development. Sweden will take a leading role in the international arena in sustainable urban development. In this context, both the Sustainable Development Goals and the UN's New Urban Agenda are key.

Initiatives for sustainable housing and residential areas

A number of measures has been taken for the development of more and better sustainable housing options. An investment grant has been introduced to promote the construction of new rental property and new student accommodation with a higher energy performance than the standard requirements for new production. The intention is that the investment will help to ensure that more housing, that is also more energy efficient, is built at rental levels that are attractive to more households. Support is also available for renovation and measures for improved energy

efficiency in existing rental property in residential areas facing socioeconomic challenges, or to erect new or refurbish existing outdoor environments in such areas. The grants are intended to spur renovation and energy efficiency measures in rental property and to create outdoor environments that improve the quality of life by stimulating activities and a sense of community. A grant could be used for such purposes as building or renovating playgrounds, meeting places, areas for spontaneous sports activities and parks in a way that preserves or develops the design of a residential area.

Smart cities

With the ongoing process of urbanisation comes an increasing impact on the environment. Urbanisation and demographic trends may also create conflict between different groups in the population and challenges in areas such as health and social care. At the same time, there is much potential for cities to address these challenges effectively, for example through infrastructural solutions and by ensuring that the built environment can be used in intelligent ways and shared by large numbers of people. There is great potential for Sweden to maintain its trailblazing status in sustainable urban development, and so it is important to make

full use of the innovative drive and technological tools that are now available. A collaborative programme for Smart Cities has been established to boost the development of smart cities. By testing new solutions, the programme is helping to create a more sustainable society while also opening up opportunities for business and enhancing Sweden's competitiveness. Knowledge sharing and collaboration ensure the focus in smart cities is on people's needs.

Reduced segregation

There is currently a trend towards increased segregation in our cities and growing inequality in Sweden. There can be considerable differences between the residential areas in the same city or municipality in terms of unemployment, life expectancy, educational outcomes, income, benefit dependency, social services, health, election turnout and exposure to crime and lack of security. There are also differences within the residential areas between women and men and between girls and boys. The programme of reform that sets out to reduce segregation aims to boost areas that face socioeconomic challenges and tackle the structural causes of segregation. Actions include reducing housing segregation, boosting schools, reducing

long-term unemployment, strengthening democracy and combatting crime.

Liveable Cities

The Strategy for Liveable Cities sets out an integrated policy on sustainable urban development, and is Sweden's first national urban development strategy. The Strategy focuses on goals for sustainable cities, policies on transport and green spaces, primarily in urban areas, and innovative, sustainable construction. The overarching goal is for sustainable cities to be inclusive and accessible urban environments that offer everyone an attractive and green living environment. Their compact nature makes it easy to live an everyday life and get around using sustainable transport, such as walking and cycling. The holistic approach of the planning together with smart solutions contribute to cities where people can live climate-smart, healthy and safe lives.

Council for Sustainable Cities

A Council for Sustainable Cities, which is to implement government policy on sustainable urban development, has been established. The Council will provide a forum for the heads of those agencies that are strategically important for our long-term work on sustainable urban development. It will report annually on a combined list of

measures that the agencies have either implemented or are planning to implement. It will also present proposals for measures that lie either wholly or partially outside the areas of responsibility of the member agencies and suggest issues that should be examined.

Urban environment agreements

In 2015, urban environment agreements was established to encourage a higher proportion of passenger transport by means of cycling and public transport in cities. This support provides opportunities for municipalities and county councils to receive up to 50 per cent in central government co-financing for infrastructure for public transport, and from 2017 also for cycling. To increase the chances of producing a more thoroughly prepared proposal, at the same time as opportunities are given to implement more time-consuming measures and services in return, the urban environment agreements have been extended. For 2018 urban environment agreements amount to SEK 1 billion and they are part of the economic framework for the development of the transport system between 2018 and 2029.

The Climate Leap

Local authorities, companies, organisations and others can

apply for support for measures that reduces climate impact. Several of the actions contribute to sustainable urban development. By the end of September 2018, funding has been awarded for over 20 000 charging points for electric vehicles that will reduce greenhouse gas emissions, air pollution and noise. Other examples include support for the expansion of district heating networks, information initiatives for sustainable commuting and energy efficiency measures in apartment buildings.

Focus on construction in wood

Sweden has a long tradition of building in wood and continued development of this expertise is very important in terms of several political objectives and social challenges. Technological developments have created conditions for increased use of wood, particularly in housing construction, and there is potential for development and growth of wood construction. Construction using sustainably-produced forest products should be encouraged in order to increase climate benefit, housing construction, exports and employment across Sweden. Several measures has therefore been put in place to develop the wooden construction sector in Sweden and promote more sustainable construction.



Ministry of Culture

SE-103 33 Stockholm

Sweden

Switchboard: +46 8 405 10 00

www.government.se