

GENUS LOCI: A SENSE OF PLACE

People who choose to live in the Highlands do so because they love the landscape and want to live close to it. However, many new developments, typically cul-de-sacs with detached villas, divorce the inhabitants from this landscape because they use up so much land that the connection with nature is lost. The sprawl of such development makes for greater distances which encourage greater use of cars which in turn further divorces the inhabitants from their surroundings, as well as producing fumes and noise and allowing thousands of square metres to be lost to tarmac road surfaces.

To achieve a unique sense of place, the settlement is envisaged as a cluster of buildings in the forest, making a minimal footprint on the land, allowing the inhabitants to come together as a community and at the same time have close contact with and enable easy connection to nature.

Building in the Highlands would be a matter of combining both community and buildings to create a pleasant environment with a good local microclimate.

The centre of the community would be a high-quality public realm, which encourages people to walk and meet. The centre of the settlement would be more than just a long drawn-out strip of commercial buildings and services separated by parking, where the physical presence of cars dominates (noise, pollution, risk of accidents, sprawl increasing walking distances). Car parks and supermarkets may be part of our daily lives, but surely they should adapt to suit our environment – not our environment to suit them?

This is not about inventing something new, but working with the place, understanding people and the traditional building patterns and materials; working with the existing landscape and local climate to make a somewhere that truly belongs to this place.



Typical suburban sprawl destroys rural environments



Principle of village cluster respecting woodland setting