

This event reviewed current tools to create more successful places through a series of presentations and interactive sessions.

It featured West Dunbartonshire's initiative to develop an Urban Design Panel in an area of deprivation. Where well designed place can improve lives and the delivery of services.

PRESENTATIONS

Design Panels, quality indicators and the Place Standard are tools that help the planning process make better places.

The planning application process can be made smoother and simpler by introducing design criteria to be taken on board before the pre-application stage of the process.

Design Panels can give planners and developers "place" confidence when dealing with planning applications, quality indicators allow a multi-disciplinary team to assess impact on place.

INTERACTIVE SESSIONS

Early emphasis on design in the application process requires corporate and political leadership. stepping out of our silos and having early conversations.

OBJECTIVE

How can we ensure design of a place goes beyond the way things look to address how they work for everyone?

What tools are there for planning to embrace its part in the quality of places?

What help is there for planners when they give consent for changes to a place?



Further information



www.improvementservice.org.uk/planning-skills.html



www.twitter.com/planningskills

Irene Beautyman
Planning for Place Programme Manager
07908930763
irene.beautyman@improvementservice.org.uk



LEAD PRACTICE PAPER

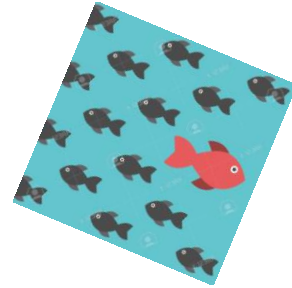
The Tools to Deliver Successful Places

Colin Mair
CEO
Improvement Service

Design and its impact on place is an important part of Christie's ongoing reform in all public services because opportunities for communities are very much affected by the way places are put together. Christie stated the public sector had to: - take place more seriously, - and do so in a way that empowers. Today looks at actual tools to work with communities and work with each other to implement both of these.

Joyce White
CEO
West Dunbartonshire Council

A one council approach to "working with our partners, led by our communities" requires strong strategic leadership founded in a strategic plan to create a vibrant economy and place. Developing a joint approach to work with others on delivering effective places has been key. Focus for everything being discussed today is its direct impact on the wellbeing of our people. A prime example is what will happen on the vacant Queens Quay site adjacent to today's venue.



"Everyone in this Council is a place maker"

Ian Gilzean
Chief Architect
Scottish Government

Scottish Government puts design central to a wide range of policy objectives including health and wellbeing and a new approach to delivery.

Planning Review themes are to simplify the system and increase corporate significance so Planning is not just about land use. This means promoting design and delivery, giving communities a greater say on the detail, delivering greater places to reduce inequality and promote inclusive growth.

This suggests a design panel decides a set of indicators on what quality is to enable a consistent assessment approach.



Jim MacDonald
CEO
Architecture and Design Scotland

Place is fundamental to the life chances of people. Design is not just about how things look. Thinking about design can inform good place making and the delivery of services. "To get places to work, everyone who's got a stake in the place needs to be part of it."

A designer needs to work with the users to help them find the solution. Get people involved in a collaborative process before pen goes to paper. Communities and developers together. Those who will use, own and invest.

Design reviews have typically given input when things are at such a late stage in development that it minimises the value added. A&DS are looking at approaches give design advice earlier in the process. The Place Standard Tool can help communicate between professionals and communities.



Richard Cairns
Strategic Director
West Dunbartonshire Council

Question for the market is "why come here?" and "why choose to do something special?".

Part of the answer will come from a design panel that has to be:

- **CONFIDENT,**
- **COLLABORATIVE** between professionals & communities
- **CHALLENGING** in its drive to excellence to say "that is not good enough".

We will only do this once and it has to last several lifetimes. Good design can add value in the market. We need to find how to do that in West Dunbartonshire.



Patrick McGlinchey
Former Deputy Leader, West
Dunbartonshire Council

West Duns is a small post-industrial local authority on the fringe of a city. It is a place where it can feel daunting to stand up to developers and ask for better design. Daunting because you may lose out on jobs and other opportunities. The desire for growth can surpass the desire for good urban design. Difficulty is to achieve both.

This Council is like many places with identikit designed retail and housing development. They add growth but not character. Want to avoid the same happening again.

Process began by looking at other panels but found they were either cities or prosperous areas. None were an "exact fit for us". Questioned "could we have one as a post-industrial authority?" and "could we afford to have one?". Apprehension that a panel may be a barrier to development. That developers may stop coming to West Dunbartonshire.

Building consensus involved identifying political and staff champions; an evidence base on what others had done and where that fitted with our area; working with A&DS, and; seeing design as a means to achieve economic benefit.



*"Easing passage through the
planning system"*

We want a Design Panel with the following functions:

Enabler – Easing passage through the planning system

Co-producer – Working hand-in-hand with the community.

Culture Changer – Everyone in West Dunbartonshire Council is a place maker.

Educator – to give communities the skills to engage with built environment profession and have a voice.

Connection Maker - Connecting built environment professions with each other and with the community.



Pamela Clifford

**Planning & Building Standards Manager,
West Dunbartonshire Council**

West Dunbartonshire is one of the smallest local authorities with some of the most deprived areas in the country. A key objective for the Council is regeneration. Development site opportunities often face poor quality proposals which, with amendment, become average. Want to get high quality development. This led to considering a design panel.

Other influencers were: - importance of place making in Scottish Government agenda; - the need for less emphasis on performance and how long a decision takes and more emphasis on the quality of the development on the ground; and - political support has been critical.

The panels role will be to identify weak, inappropriate development at an early stage. This can save time and money later in the application process; and give confidence and consistency to decision makers



“Connecting built environment professions with each other and with the community”

Eily Webster

**Senior Planning Officer
Moray Council**

They introduced a quality audit to engage with developers on design issues and: - develop a consistent approach to the design of developments; - allow for early engagement in the process when it can have maximum impact: - to allow for clear articulation of issues and mitigation required.

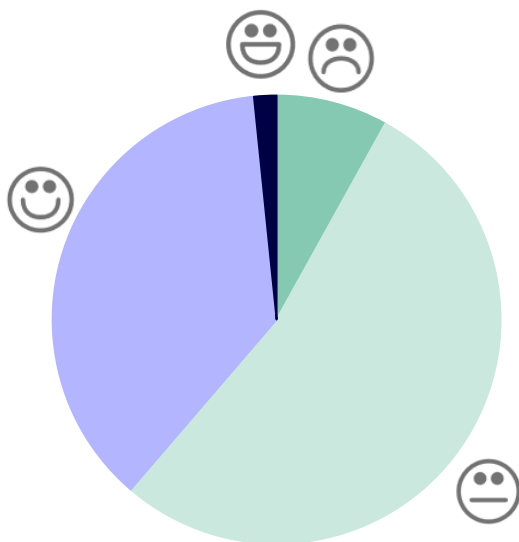
The audit is made up of 3 key themes and 12 questions. Questions are scored red, amber or green to identify where there is a design issue. A multi-disciplinary team carries out the assessment. Quality audit is a material consideration reported to committee.

Moray has used this as a pre pre-app as simply pre-app is too late as resources are already down the line. This took meeting with local reps from Homes for Scotland to an agreed approach. It is leading to a smoother planning process for all.

Key learnings so far have been the benefits of talking as early as possible and that the use of an audit gives consistency. It has also led to a better common understanding between local authority services on what they want.

INTERACTIVE SESSION

My organisation has a joined up “big picture” approach to considering design as an integral part of delivering successful places



WHY?



- Buy in from council leadership both corporate and political
- Place making and heritage are now a focus
- Available internal resources
- Building on previous successful work



- Often reactive to design issues but guidance and some projects are there
- Council policies on other issues such as economic development supersede design
- Joined up thinking at officer and managerial level but not at political level
- No dedicated staff to carry out this task



- Lack of resources to implement better design
- Siloed departments / lack of collaborative work
- Design is not a focus of the local development plan

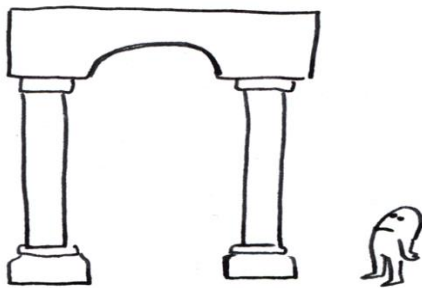
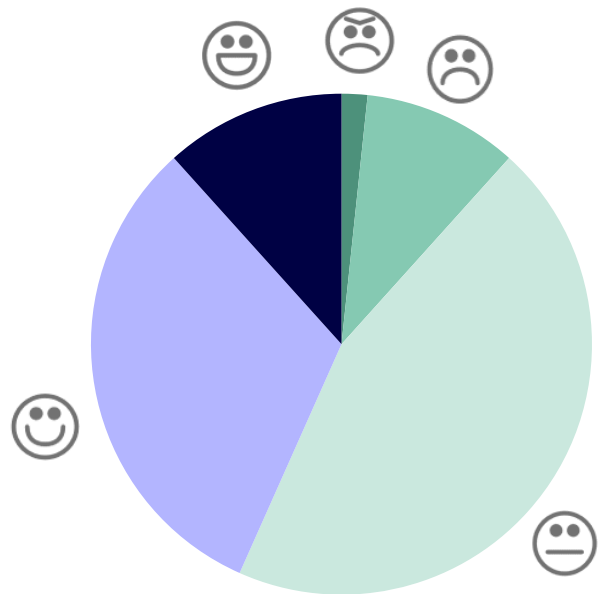


**MEANS OF ACHIEVING
THIS:**

- Strong design guidance
- A developers' protocol
- The use of master planning or development frameworks
- Early engagement of all stakeholders including the public
- Use of public consultation such as the Place Standard or charrette processes
- One to one meetings between the local authority and developers
- Free pre-application service
- Ample resources available to local authority staff
- Expert advice available e.g. design panels
- Support and strategic direction provided by elected members

INTERACTIVE SESSION

There is a defined mechanism to begin a conversation about design before a planning application is submitted to the planning authority.



BUT, WHAT'S THE POINT?



How best could we achieve a collaborative “big picture” consideration of place?

What are your observations of its use?

Early Engagement

Advice is easier for developers to take on board

Good design guidance and officer knowledge

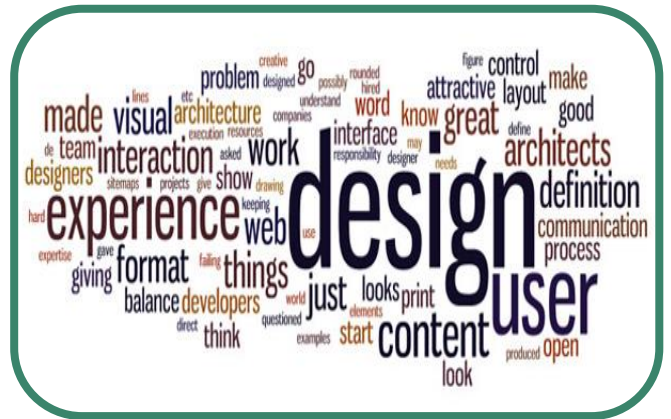
Added value to developers

Public consultation

Realistic expectations of what can be achieved

Masterplan process

Effective in defining a design led approach



QUESTION

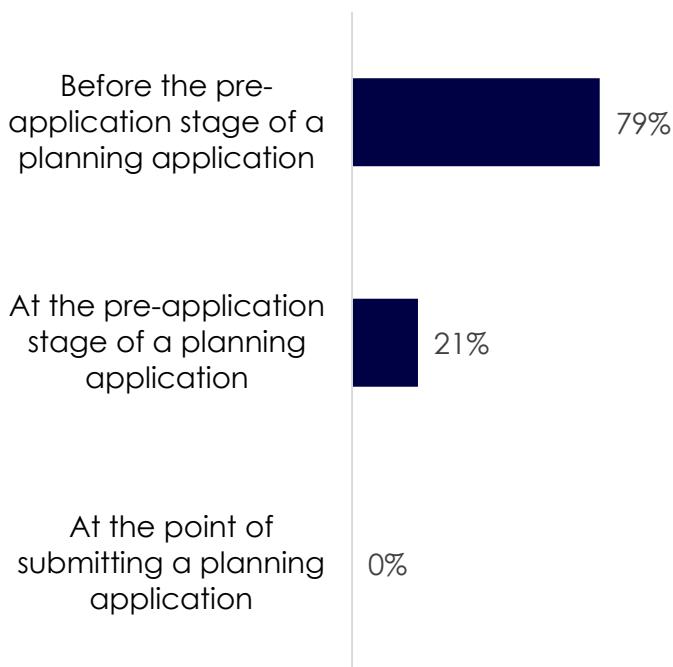
What do you think are the specific issues that a design panel should be addressing?

- Keeping a sense of place with an awareness of historic identity and future requirements
- Linking design issues specific to an area and understanding the end users needs
- Problem solving with all stakeholders
- Supporting joined up working within local authorities
- Engaging with the development industry to improve design standards
- Encouraging the best quality materials and design possible
- Providing a clear definition of what constitutes good design



INTERACTIVE SESSION

I feel that the most important place for a conversation about design and its impact on a place should happen...



REASONS GIVEN

Before the pre-application stage of a planning application

- Needs to be as early as possible so the applicant is aware of local authority guidance and design principles
- Can show the developer the aspirations of the local development plan
- Could be done at the call for sites stage for major applications
- Any stage after this may be too late for developers to amend their application
- Would save money for both the local authority and developer knowing requirements at an early stage

At the pre-application stage of a planning application

- Already a pre-established principle in place to engage in this way at this point
- The pre-app stage would allow for the greatest clarity in discussion with developers
- It can be difficult to do before this stage

Other comments

- All stages are too late, there needs to be a policy hook to set this in place
- This needs to be a continued dialogue through all stages of the process



RESPONSES

There was a general consensus of wanting to become more involved in design processes.

BARRIERS TO INVOLVEMENT

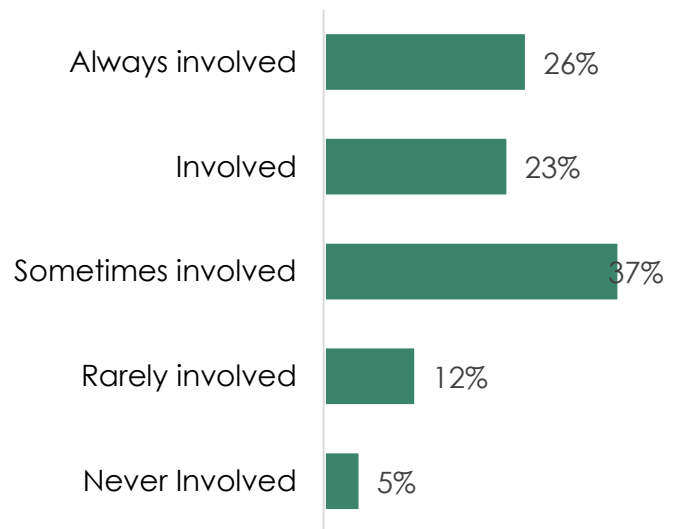
- Resourcing issues, cannot be taken away from main role
- Lack of awareness of the work being carried out in other council departments
- Planning department often brought in too late to make a contribution
- Lack of willingness for developers to engage
- Political pressure
- Lack of knowledge on design

METHODS TO OVERCOME THESE BARRIERS

- An appropriately funded planning department, this could partly be done by pre-application charging
- Improved internal communication channels
- A protocol to engage with developers
- Less pressure from the Scottish Government on speed to allow more time for place making
- Access to case studies from elsewhere, guidance and training

INTERACTIVE SESSION

I am fully involved in conversations about the quality of design in proposals for development



“Cities have the capability of providing something for everybody only when they are created by everybody”.

Jane Jacobs