



Supplementary Guidance

Topic: Design Review Panel

March 2012



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1. Background

1.1 Why Design Review?

The Design Review process embraces the new Modernising the Planning System agenda, which places greater emphasis on addressing issues earlier in the process, particularly at pre-application stage.

The Scottish Government is striving for high quality design in all new developments, which is apparent from publications such as Designing Places and Designing Streets, along with the Planning Advice Notes on Design Statements and Masterplanning. The Government also emphasise the importance of raising design awareness and improving skills with the focus and priority needing to be given to improving the design quality of new developments proposals.

The approved Aberdeen City and Shire Structure Plan (August 2009) makes it clear, that in order to improve the quality of developments in the north east, a design review process for masterplans and the most significant planning applications is required.



2. Introduction

2.1 What is a Design Review and what is the value of the process?

In order to raise awareness of design in the North East, a Design Review Panel has been set up. There needs to be improvements made to the quality of the built environment by securing well designed places and buildings that respect and contribute positively to their settings, promote aspiration, provide a sense of place, and use resources efficiently. The panel will consider a range of schemes (including masterplans and major applications) that are significant because of size, impact, public interest, location or set new standards for the future.

The Design Review will offer constructive and objective advice at an early stage in the process which should lead to a better output and a stronger working relationship between all those involved. The advice given will draw on professional knowledge and experience within a local context, offering the opportunity for comprehensive evaluation of development proposals. It should be noted that some schemes may be considered as good design, and therefore may not require any changes. This process is most effective at the pre- application stage when there is still time for changes and discussions. It should be noted that the Design Review Process does not supersede or prejudice the planning process.



3. Design Review Panel

3.1 Panel Composition

The review team will be voluntary and chaired by the local authority Head of Service. The Chair will not contribute to discussions but will ensure that the review and discussions stay on track. In addition to the Chair, there will be a Design Review Manager. Relevant Planning Case Officer(s) will also be invited to attend the Design Review to provide a brief policy background. At the end of the review the Chair will provide a summary of points made.

The panel will consist of professionals from both the public and private sectors, chosen from areas of expertise relevant to each project. Panel member backgrounds will include relevant areas of knowledge such as Architecture, Urban Design, Landscape, Public Art, Community Engagement, Planning and Infrastructure. Knowledge of the local area is desirable. Each Panel will be composed of around 6 people, drawn from a pool of up to 20 members. Panel members must be able to offer a maximum of 6 days annually to attend panel meetings and associated site visits.



3.2 Appointment of Panel Members

Panel Members will be representatives from organisations. They will have expertise and a track record of achievement in one or more relevant professional fields, with the ability to offer objective, clear and independent advice. Prior to the appointment, panel members must confirm they are aware of what is required of them. The Panel membership will be reviewed on a 2 year cycle and additional skills may be recruited in the future where necessary.

3.3 Finance

The design review and the rest of the process is free to the proponent. The panel will be entirely voluntary with meeting accommodation and subsistence being the only cost implications for the local authority.



4. Design Review Procedure

4.1 Proposal of Schemes

Projects can be referred to the panel by the planning authority or any member of the project team. Referral of the project is encouraged as early as possible in the process, before a planning application has been submitted. Sufficient information on the proposal must be submitted, to allow the Design Review Manager to determine whether a review is appropriate.

4.2 Panel Meetings

The Panel will meet on a regular basis, approximately one morning every month, to coincide as best as possible with the Planning Committee cycles. Meetings will be timetabled at the start of every year, and held in a suitable location that can support presentations. The Panel will normally discuss between 1 and 3 projects at each meeting (dependent on the size of the project).

4.3 Projects for review

Projects to be considered will be circulated to panel members in advance. Any conflict of interest must be declared to the Design Review Manager (see appendix 1). Prior to the meeting, the proponents will be required to complete a Pro-forma to brief panel members with background information. Where practical and appropriate the site will also be visited.

4.4 Review Minutes / Reports

Minutes of the meeting are taken by an Administrative Assistant, and then drafted to form a report. The draft report is then circulated to members of the Panel for agreement, before circulation to the proponent and/or publication. A report will be circulated within 10 working days of the Design Review meeting, outlining the panel's views and, if necessary, offering constructive advice on how the scheme might be improved. The report produced will reflect the general views of the panel and not any individual panel representative.

Where the scheme is already in the planning system, reports will be displayed on the website. If the review is at pre application stage, it will be subject to confidentiality procedures (see appendix 1).



5. Presentation to the Panel

These notes provide general background and advice to those making a presentation to the panel. It is essential the information presented is as comprehensive as possible in the time given, to allow the panel to make beneficial comments. The Design Review should occur during the Pre-Application Consultation process.

5.1 Prior to review

Prior to the review, the following background information on the project must be submitted to the Design Review Manager for circulation with the agenda:

- Written scheme description (pdf), including information described under 5.2 below, which will be included in the agenda to brief panel members (and other attendees) in advance of the meeting.
- Hard copies of drawings which will be used during the review presentation (along with copies in electronic format restricted to 5 Mb or less). NB if design has moved on since submission, these can be superseded on the day of the review.
- Names and roles of those who will attend the review.

5.2 At the Review

It will be the responsibility of the team backing the proposal to provide a presentation lasting a maximum 15 minutes, using appropriate illustrative materials (see list below). The review panel works best where there is an explanation the evolution of

the proposal combined with an appropriate level of detail demonstrating design, scale, massing, layout and context.

- Site and location plan within wider context
- Views (including views of the project in context)
- Photographs (aerial and site visits)
- Site Analysis (constraints and opportunities)
- Plans, sections, elevations, sketch and 3-d drawings
- Model(s), if appropriate
- Materials samples, if appropriate

Reviews will last approximately 1 hour, with a 15 minute break between submissions. The hour will be divided up as follows:

5 minutes	Introduction and policy background
15 minutes	Presentation by project team
35 minutes	Discussion
5 minutes	Feedback

5.3 After the Review

Developers and promoters of the proposals are encouraged to consider measures to accommodate the panel's suggestions and provide a written response to the points raised. This should be submitted with any subsequent planning application, forming part of the design statement. As part of the planning application process the case officer will evaluate the proposal in light of the review panel's findings and the way it responds to them. The Panel's views should be considered along with all other material planning considerations and not in isolation.

It is worth bearing in mind that some schemes may be considered as good design, and therefore do not require any changes.

6. Monitoring and evaluation

With appropriate follow-up evaluation, reports can highlight 'best practice' examples within the local context, aiding the determination of planning applications covering similar issues in the future. An annual performance review will determine if the advice given was acted upon and whether the scheme was better as a result. Furthermore, the result of the planning application process will be communicated back to the Review Panel.

It is important to review the process and procedures after 6 months, to address any issues that may have arisen or make any necessary amendments. This may include panel members, processes or reviewing the area covered by the panel.

7. References

7.1 References

Aberdeen City and Shire Structure Plan
Scottish Planning Policy
Designing Places
Designing Streets
PAN 83 Masterplanning
PAN 68 Inclusive Design
PAN 67 Housing Quality
Public Art Best Practice Guidance Note
Design Review Principles & Practice (CABE)
SHEP (Historic Scotland)

8. Further Information

More detailed information has been provided on protocol of meetings and possible conflicts of interest. These can be found on the website. **For further information or to enquire about submitting a scheme for the Panels consideration, please contact:**

Aberdeen City Council
Masterplanning, Design and
Conservation
Business Hub 4
Ground Floor North
Marischal College
Broad Street
Aberdeen City Council
AB10 1AB
www.aberdeencity.gov.uk

Tel: 01224 522246

Email: pi@aberdeencity.gov.uk

Aberdeenshire Council
Planning Policy & Environment
Woodhill House
Westburn Road
Aberdeen
AB16 5GB

www.aberdeenshire.gov.uk

Tel: 01224 664728



Appendix 1: Legal Issues

1. Conflict of Interest

Panel members and staff will be required to declare any conflict of interest in advance of meetings, based on either direct commercial interest or other non-commercial connections that might be considered by a third party. For example:

- Being involved in another scheme the proponent is putting forward for review.
- Being involved in a related project with bearing on the scheme being put forward for review.
- Being involved in a rival scheme.
- Involvement or member of another group which forms part of the scheme.
- Family relationship.

Any direct or indirect conflict of interest must be declared to the Design Review staff team. A decision will then be made by the Design Review Manager and the Chair as to whether the panel member should attend the meeting in question or not. Panel members' interests which have been declared will be recorded in the notes. Panel members may attend as part of the presenting team, however not any other part of the same meeting in their capacity as a panel member.

2. Confidentiality

The Design Review Panel undertakes to use its best endeavours to hold in confidence any information provided in the Design Review, subject to its obligations under law, including the Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act 2002.

Schemes that are received prior to a planning application being submitted will be dealt with in confidence until such a time as an application is received or the client/agent requests it be made public. The panels' comments regarding confidential schemes will be disclosed only restricted to the design team, the client, the Local Authority and the Design Review Panel members.

This information will be considered to be in the public domain and to be used in the decision making process when an application has been received.

3. Reserved Rights

The right to release comments on confidential schemes is reserved in the following circumstances:

- When the comments / views of the panel have been misrepresented.
- At a Public Inquiry.
- As a result of a valid Freedom of Information request.

Views expressed in the written letter of advice will not be attributed to individual panel members. Wherever possible the advice will be made available to the public.

Advice is given in confidence only where requested by the applicant and as part of the pre-application process.

Appendix 2: Protocol for Attendance

- 1 Membership of the Design Review Panel consists exclusively of groups, societies, and other organisations nominated by the Council.
- 2 When a representative is unable to attend a Panel meeting, it is their responsibility to send another representative or to submit an apology.
- 3 Where any representative has direct or indirect interest in the project (see below) then that individual should not attend the whole meeting. Compromising factors are:-
 - (a) Where that individual will take part in one of the presentations.
 - (b) Where that individual is closely associated with any of the presenters eg as an employee, work colleague, or as a relative.
 - (c) Where apart from the specific remit of their organisation, that individual has a financial or other interest in the development under discussion.
- 4 Should there be other reasons why the representative wishes to attend the meeting in question, this may be arranged at the discretion of the Chairperson.

The panel must also adhere to the seven principles of public life:

1 **Selflessness**

Recommendations should be made by the panel members solely in terms of the public interest. They should not do so in order to gain financial or other material benefits for themselves, their family, or their friends.

2 **Integrity**

Panel members should not place themselves under any financial or other obligation to outside individuals or organisations that might influence them in the performance of their official duties.

3 **Objectivity**

Panel members should always make decisions purely on merit.

4 **Accountability**

Panel members are accountable for their decisions and actions to the public and must submit themselves to whatever scrutiny is appropriate to their office.

5 **Openness**

Panel members should be as open as possible about all the decisions and actions that they take.

6 **Honesty**

Panel members have a duty to declare any private interests relating to their public duties and to take steps to resolve any conflicts arising in a way that protects the public interest.

7 **Leadership**

Panel members should promote and support these principles by leadership and example.

Appendix 3: Roles and Responsibilities

1. The Chair will:

- Chair meetings.
- Provide a short summary of planning issues.
- Facilitate the Panel's discussion, and not allow individual opinions to dominate.
- Sum up the discussion with a short summary of points raised, reflecting the consensus view.
- Have the capability/ confidence to summarise what, at times, may be conflicting views.

2. The Design Review Manager will:

- Arrange contacts with external organisations, including the media.
- Decide on the proposals to be reviewed, and the composition of the Panel.
- Seek out projects for Review.
- Respond to FOI requests.
- Ensure presenters provide relevant information prior to and at the review
- Contribute to panel discussions.
- Prepare a written report to summarise the points raised.
- Keep well documented records of projects, processes and comments, and, ensure that there is adequate storage space for submission presentation materials.
- Provide feedback on how projects have developed since the Review.
- Monitoring and evaluation

3. The Panel Members will:

- Participate in approximately 6 review meetings per year, along with site visits where appropriate.
- Provide constructive, timely and objective advice, relevant to their expertise.
- Voice opinions and advice in front of the presenting team.
- Participate in a trial review meeting to familiarise themselves with the rules and process.

The panel will include members from:

RTPI

RIAS

RICS

Robert Gordons University

Landscape Institute

Historic Scotland

Scottish Natural Heritage

(this is not an exhaustive list - other members will be considered)

4. The Administrative Assistant will:

- Arrange the Panel's meeting places and times.
- Provide an agenda for meetings, with draft list of Panel members, 3 days prior to meeting.
- Take minutes of meetings.
- Arrange possible site visits.
- Circulate written reports



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For help with **language / interpreting** and other formats of communication support, please contact:

ভাষা/ইন্টারপ্রেটিং এবং অন্যান্য ফরমেটের
যোগাযোগ সাহায্যের জন্য দয়া করে
:01224 523 470
নম্বরে যোগাযোগ করবেন।

如果需要語言/傳譯及其他形式的傳訊支援服務，
請聯絡:01224 523 470

Если требуется помощь при выборе
языка / переводчика или других
способов общения, звоните по
телефону :01224 523 470

للحصول على مساعدة بخصوص اللغة/ الترجمة
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تک پہنچانے میں مدد کی دوسری طرزوں کیلئے، براہ کرم اس نمبر پر
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W razie potrzeby pomocy z językiem
angielskim albo z tłumaczeniem, albo
jakiejkolwiek innej pomocy do
porozumienia, proszę skontaktować:
01224 523 470

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