city town village rural

A Policy Statement for Scotland

designing places

Summary

Creating successful and sustainable places will depend on a shift in attitudes, expectations and practices about the design of cities, towns, villages and the countryside. We need:

1 Decision makers who understand the role of design in delivering sustainable development (page 9).

2 Developers, landowners, investors and public bodies who recognise the commercial and economic value of good design (page 18).

3 Effective collaboration between disciplines, professionals, local communities and others in the planning and urban design process (page 27).

4 Development plans with effective design policies, and urban design frameworks, development briefs and master plans to provide planning and design guidance (page 34).

5 Developers submitting design statements with planning applications that explain the design principles on which the development proposal is based (page 41).

6 A high level of awareness and urban design skills in local authorities, including planners and councillors who are committed to raising design standards and understand the impact of their decisions (page 47).

7 A stronger design element in built environment professional education (page 48).

8 Better design education in continuous professional development programmes (page 49).

9 Greater commitment to higher standards of design among public bodies (page 49).

urban design the collaborative process of shaping the setting for life in cities, towns, villages and rural areas

Contents

confident, competitive & compassionate Scotland

Foreword

The Point Conference Centre, Edinburgh

In November 2000 my predecessor as Planning Minister, Sam Galbraith, asked the question "Where are the conservation areas of tomorrow?" There are no single or simple solutions to raising the standard of development in urban and rural Scotland – but we have to make a start.

NPPG1 (Revised 2000) The Planning System emphasises the importance of design considerations in reaching planning decisions. We have published Planning Advice Notes on subjects such as the Siting and Design of Housing in the Countryside, Small Towns and Town Centre Improvement. But what we did not have until now was a general statement setting out the Executive's aspirations for design and the role of the planning system in delivering these.

This document fills that gap. It was written by Robert Cowan, an urban designer and author. A Steering Group including Scottish Executive officials and outside interests steered the work. Represented on the Group were the Urban Design Alliance (which embraces the Royal Town Planning Institute in Scotland, the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors in Scotland and the Royal Incorporation of Architects in

Scotland), planning and architecture schools, local authority officials, architects, landscape architects and transport planners. The aim of the document is to demystify urban design and to demonstrate how the value of design can contribute to the quality of our lives. Good design is an integral part of a confident, competitive and compassionate Scotland.

This statement sits alongside the policy on architecture, which was launched in October 2001, and it is a material consideration in decisions in planning applications and appeals. It will also provide the basis for a series of Planning Advice Notes dealing with more detailed aspects of design.

Together I hope that these will provide the foundations for tomorrow's conservation areas.

Lewis Macdonald

Lewis Macdonald, MSP
Deputy Minister for Transport and Planning

# first

The first policy statement on designing places in Scotland

Introduction

This, the first policy statement on designing places in Scotland, marks the Scottish Executive's determination to raise standards of urban and rural development.

Designing Places sets out the policy context for important areas of planning policy, design guidance, professional practice, and education and training. It is aimed at everyone who plays a part in shaping the built environment, whether as politicians, developers, planners, designers, opinion-formers or anyone else whose attitudes have a direct or indirect influence on what gets built. The statement's themes will be developed in further documents with more detailed operational guidance.

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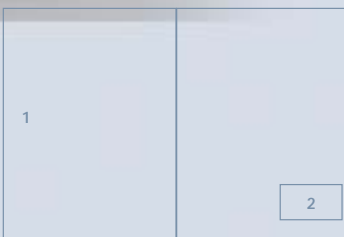
1: Science Centre, Glasgow
2: Scottish Parliament Development Site, Edinburgh

village   rural

Social, economic and environmental goals

Good design has always been valued by those who appreciate architecture. Today its value is recognised also as a practical means of achieving a wide range of social, economic and environmental goals, making places that will be successful and sustainable.

At one end of the scale, sensitive siting and design of single houses in the countryside can help support and revitalise rural communities without undermining the area's distinctive qualities. At the other end, Scotland's cities challenge us to find forms of sustainable development that will renew urban life.
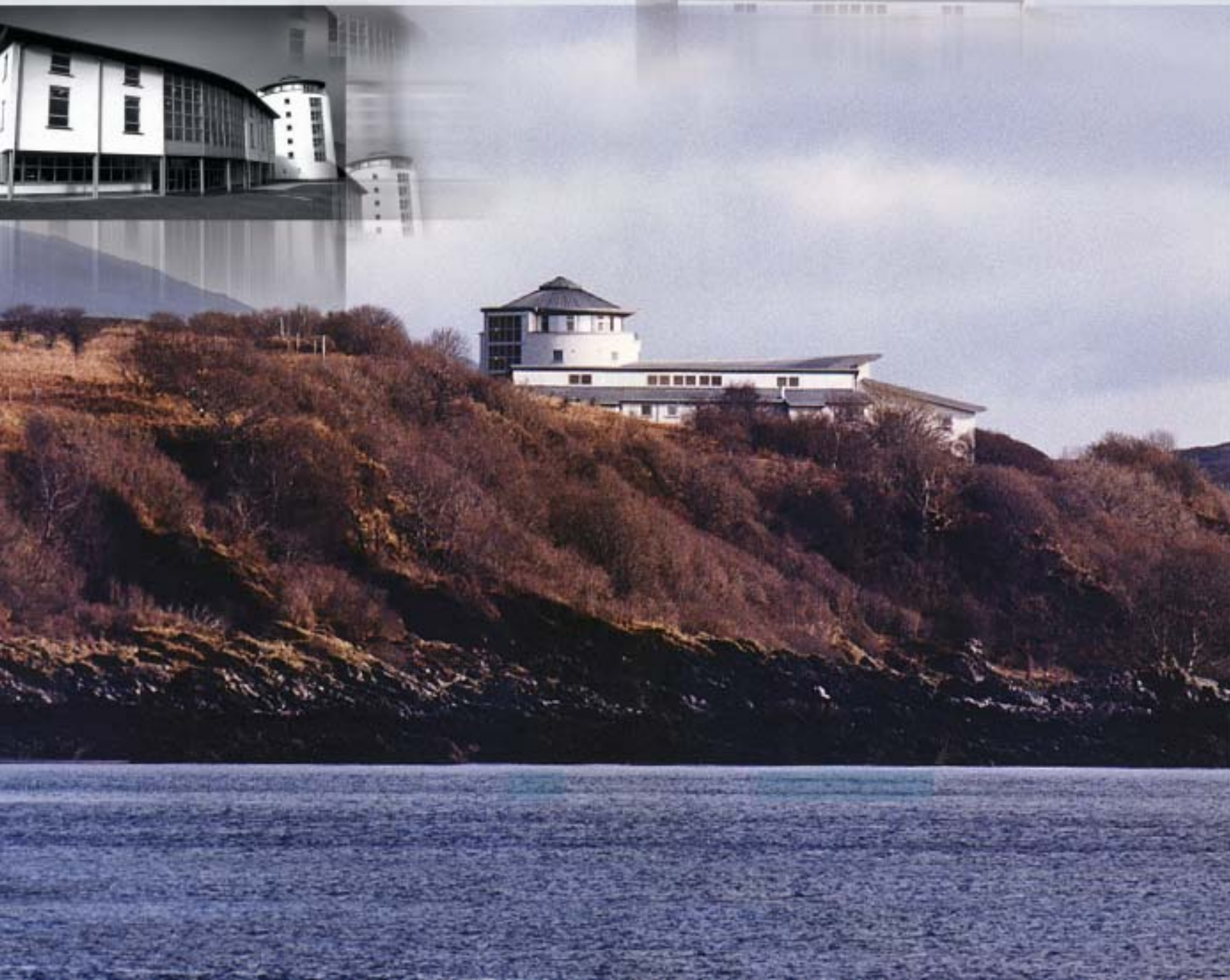
The design of places plays a large part in determining what impact we have on the land and other scarce resources. Decisions about design determine how much energy we will use, how efficient transport systems will be, and what people and economic activities will flourish in a particular place.

In recent years we have learned a great deal, often through painful experience, about design principles and how to apply them. Opportunities for design to make successful places are taken, or missed, every day.

Every day countless decisions are made that have the potential to make a piece of a city, town or village a little more lively, welcoming and pleasant, or a little more hostile, unpleasant or unsafe; or to enhance or erode the character of some corner of rural Scotland. These are design decisions, even though they may well not be taken by designers.

The real trail of responsibility may lead back to people who write policy, set standards, draft briefs, select consultants, issue design guidance and decide whether to give a proposal planning permission. Alternatively the trail may begin with a developer or client who places little value on good design.

opportunities

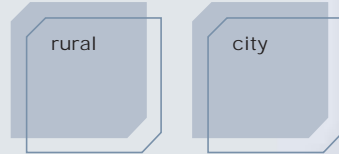**for design to make successful places are taken, or missed, every day**

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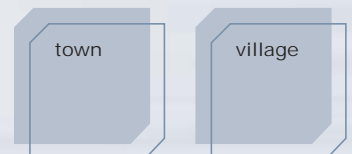
1: Gaelic College, Skye, Highland
2: Festival Square, Edinburgh

Scotland's urban and rural traditions

rural   city

Scotland's enormously rich tradition of urban design goes back to the medieval period, for example at St Andrews. Many of Scotland's smaller towns and villages were built as new towns or extended in planned settlements. Landowners created many planned rural settlements in a drive for improvement. The New Town of Edinburgh is probably Europe's best example of neoclassical town planning. Scotland's tenement tradition is proving unexpectedly robust and today's designers are finding new ways of interpreting it. The best of these patterns of development are seen today as models of successful design for the 21st century.

In the development of 20th century town and regional planning, no one was more influential than Patrick Geddes. Scotland pioneered regional planning with the 1946 Clyde Valley plan, setting out a new strategy for tackling the appalling legacy of Victorian slums. The programme of new towns was one result.

Scotland's confidence in making its urban future has been shaken, as elsewhere, by instances where some of the hopes of 20th century planning and architecture turned out to have been misplaced. We have learned by bitter experience the financial and human cost of building against the grain of the natural landscape and the patterns of human life.

After three difficult decades, we are becoming more confident that we understand what makes successful places. The conservation of historic buildings was the starting point. It is now accepted that the best of what has been handed down to us should be protected. The rise of the conservation movement has involved a rediscovery of what makes places work.

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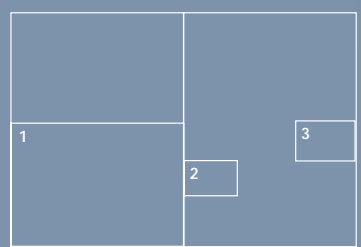
1: St Andrew Square, Edinburgh
2: Marchmont, Edinburgh
3: Sundrum, South Ayrshire

The qualities of successful places

The most successful places, the ones that flourish socially and economically, tend to have certain qualities in common. First, they have a distinct identity. Second, their spaces are safe and pleasant. Third, they are easy to move around, especially on foot. Fourth, visitors feel a sense of welcome.

Places that have been successful for a long time, or that are likely to continue to be successful, may well have another quality, which may not be immediately apparent – they adapt easily to changing circumstances. Finally, places that are successful in the long term, and which contribute to the wider quality of life, will prove to make good use of scarce resources. They are sustainable.

Sustainability – the measure of the likely impact of development on the social, economic and environmental conditions of people in the future and in other places – must run as a common thread through all our thinking about design. Thinking about sustainability focuses in particular on promoting greener lifestyles, energy efficiency, mixed uses, biodiversity, transport and water quality.

sustainability

The measure of the likely impact of development on the social, economic and environmental conditions of people in the future and in other places

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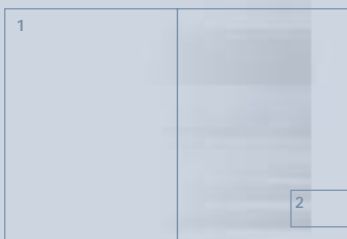
1 & 2: Edinburgh Park, Edinburgh

Those six qualities – identity, safe and pleasant spaces, ease of movement, a sense of welcome, adaptability and good use of resources – are at the heart of good design for urban and rural development.

There is one other quality that many successful places have. Beauty, like the other six, should also be one of the objectives of urban design. It is less easy to plan for directly, but we may not need to. In a place that has the six qualities, beauty may well be the natural product of the patterns of human life and the skills of talented designers.

Throughout Scotland there are beautiful cities, towns and villages that were created with the help of civic leaders with vision, landowners with a stake in the long term future, and developers, architects and designers of talent and genius. Today their legacy is being eroded and too little of value is being put in their place.

Circumstances are more difficult than ever. Globalisation stamps its undifferentiated image on the world. Traditional town based industries have largely disappeared as technology increasingly frees us from ties of place. The individual freedoms of the private car have not been won without a cost to the quality of the places where we live.

What we build can be important to our sense of identity at all scales, from local to regional and national. In the words of the Scottish Executive's framework document on *The Development of a Policy on Architecture for Scotland:* 'The architecture and buildings of our towns, cities and rural settlements are a repository of our common culture and heritage, they provide continuity and a unique sense of history and tradition… The challenge for our architecture today is to fuse what is still vital in local tradition with the best in our increasingly global civilisation, to marry them in new ways that meet our modern needs and aspirations.'
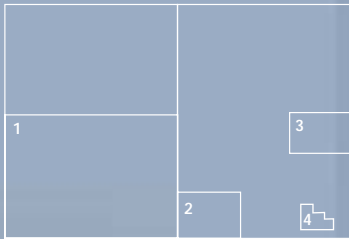
1: City Centre, Dundee
2: Inveraray, Argyll and Bute
3: Irvine, North Ayrshire
4: Scottish Executive Architectural Policy Documents

Design in the landscape

Much successful development is rooted in the landscape: in the shape of the land, its materials, its character, its appearance and its ecologies. All these are the result of natural and cultural processes. Traditionally the landscape and the materials that can be won from it have shaped the patterns of building, helping to make places locally or regionally distinctive.
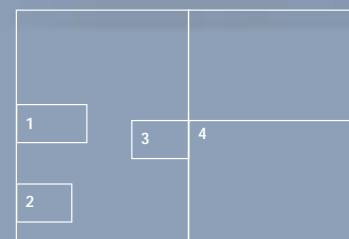
1: Isle of Barra, Western Isles
2: Ben Nevis, Highland
3: Peebles, Scottish Borders
4: Townscape, Edinburgh

Development designed to make the most of its setting in the landscape is likely to avoid today's common failing of looking and feeling as though it could be anywhere. Understanding the landscape is the basis for knowing such essentials as what plant species will flourish, how drainage systems can work successfully and how buildings can best be sited. Places that are distinctive and designed with a real understanding of the natural world are likely to be enjoyed, cared for and valued.

Scotland's well loved places show how the landscape can inspire in very different ways in different settings: from cities whose grandeur is enhanced by dramatic natural settings to the smallest village nestling in a hillside.

Landscape design can create places in harmony with natural processes of change. Landscape architects are particularly conscious that design is a matter of directing a process of continuous change and that success depends on carefully managing what has been created.

In the countryside, inappropriate developments, however small, can have large impacts. Sensitive location and design is needed to avoid urban sprawl, ribbon development, new buildings on obtrusive sites, incongruous materials and house styles more characteristic of suburban than rural areas. To protect the countryside we need to find opportunities for infill development, for converting and rehabilitating existing buildings, and for planning buildings in groups rather than on their own.

Forgotten places

The physical form of a development can enhance or detract from the qualities of a place, and support or undermine the intended uses. In every part of a city, town or village where there is scope for change – and that is almost everywhere – there will be a wealth of opportunities for achieving good design.

Too often, though, the opportunities are wasted. Sometimes the necessary framework of planning and design policy and guidance is missing. Sometimes the designer may not be up to the job. Too many buildings and spaces are designed by someone with no design training.

Often opportunities are wasted because no one had any expectation that here was a place where any qualities might be achieved. It was written off as just a mass market housing development, an industrial estate, a leisure park, a corner of suburbia, a supermarket's delivery yard, a gyratory road round the shopping centre, or the scrubby bit of land where the town peters out. Significant parts of our cities, towns and villages consist of just those sorts of forgotten places.

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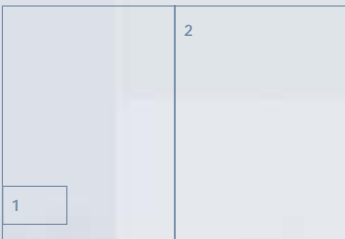
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1: Dalry, Edinburgh
2: Newton Mearns, East Renfrewshire

framework

Sometimes the necessary framework of planning and design policy and guidance is missing

The fourth dimension

town

Urban design is often said to be a matter of working in three dimensions, compared to the two dimensions of land use or policy planning. In fact urban design should be four dimensional, the fourth dimension being time. Master plans generally show an end state, even when continuous change is much more likely.

We need to design and plan in the expectation that social, economic and technological conditions will change. A development brief, for example, should be a basis for dialogue between planners and developers rather than a prescriptive substitute for it. Arrangements for long term management and maintenance is as important as the actual design.
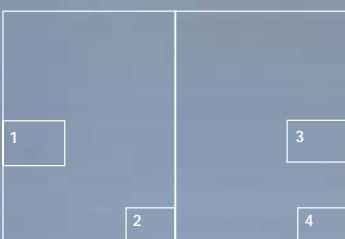
1: Culross, Fife
2: Falkland, Fife
3: Willowbrae, Edinburgh
4: Central Edinburgh

There should be scope for reviewing developments to assess how well the planning process worked. Councillors should visit representative examples so that they understand the consequences of the council's policies and their own decisions. Planning and design guidance should itself be reviewed periodically to ensure that it remains effective.

Much of what makes or mars cities, towns, villages and the countryside does not just consist of buildings, but is the consequence of the continuous application of, for example, highway standards (specifying the details of road design, signage, safety measures and traffic calming) and planning standards (specifying such matters as parking and the distance between buildings). Usually these are imposed for reasons far removed from any considerations of design. Often, without anyone noticing, places are shaped by the innumerable decisions that together can create the overwhelming impression that no one cares.

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village

17

Arrangements for management, aftercare and maintenance may be as important as the actual design

management

The value of good design

Good design is a means of achieving aims and adding value:

- A well thought out design process, for example, with urban design frameworks and development briefs, can provide a clear basis for communication and negotiation. Developers benefit from a good degree of certainty about what is expected, avoiding delay and saving abortive work and unnecessary expense. The design process can resolve conflicts that might otherwise emerge, messily and expensively, at a later stage.

- Good design adds value to the investment that any development scheme represents.

- Good design creates places that work. People will use and value such places, supporting regeneration and bringing long term economic benefits. Well designed places attract customers and their workplaces keep their staff.

- Good design can reduce the long term costs of energy, maintenance, management and security.

- Well designed places establish and maintain a distinct identity, to the benefit of users and investors.

- Well designed places are easy to get to and move around. The thought put into connecting them into their surroundings pays off.

- Good design is a key to achieving social, economic and environmental goals of public policy, as laid down by central and local government. It can bridge the gap between aspirations and reality.

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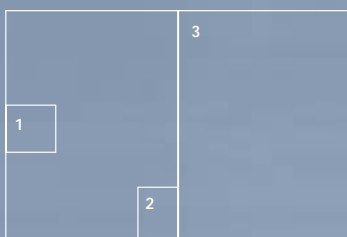
1 & 2: George Street, Edinburgh
3: Hunter Square, Edinburgh

poorly designed

Often development is poorly designed because those who commissioned or built it failed to see how design could serve their own best interests

The price of poor design

Ineptly designed development continues to be built. Sometimes the reason is that the costs of a poorly designed development falls on people other than those who commissioned, designed or built it.

The price of poor design is paid by people who find their familiar routes blocked, who walk in the shadows of blank walls, whose choices are limited by spaces that make them feel unsafe and unwelcome, and whose enjoyment of the countryside is spoiled. The price is paid by people who find themselves living in newly built suburban housing whose designers gave no thought to the quality and distinctiveness of the

place they were making. It is paid by people whose surroundings are degraded by the consequences of unsustainable building practices, and by those who will end up paying a building's long term energy, maintenance and management costs. It is paid by those who live in a place whose decline has been made more painful by its buildings and spaces proving hard to adapt.
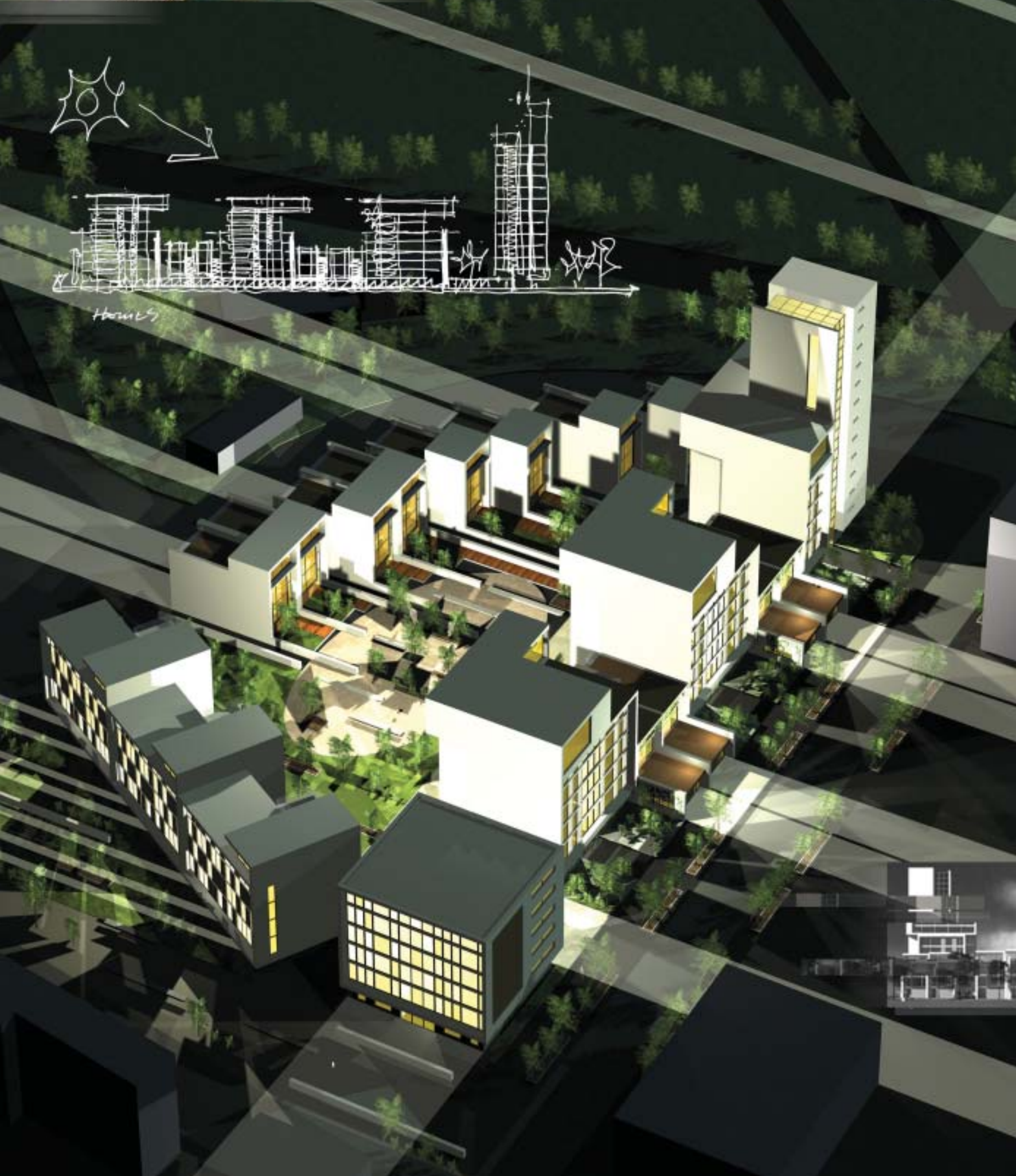
Often, though, development is poorly designed because those who commissioned or built it failed to see how design could serve their own best interests.
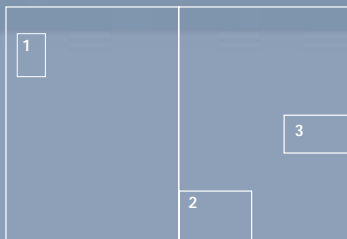
1: Whitfield, Dundee
2: Sighthill, Edinburgh
3: Scottish Borders

Setting a framework for design

A framework for design can work at any scale – from a small building, at one end of the scale, to preparing an urban design framework or master plan for an entire area, at the other. There are a number of distinct stages: 1. appraise the local context; 2. review whatever policy, guidance and regulations apply; 3. conceive a vision for the place; 4. find out what is likely to be feasible; 5. draw up a set of planning and design principles; and 6. agree on the development process.

Those six stages might be anything from the paragraph headings for a simple design statement to the chapter headings of a major planning and design guidance document. How fully the relevant questions will be answered will depend on the scale and sensitivity of the site or area.
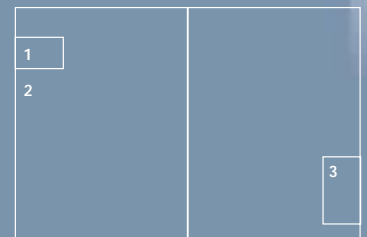
1: Homes for the Future 1, Glasgow
2: Homes for the Future 2, Glasgow
3: Back Wynd, Aberdeen

vision
A framework for design can work at any scale

Design framework

1. Context appraisal
What do we understand about the place and its setting?

Context appraisal is at the heart of designing places. A successful balance between the inevitably conflicting interests of various uses and users can be achieved only through understanding the place and its people. Local context can be appraised in terms of the six design qualities – identity, safe and pleasant spaces, ease of movement, a sense of welcome, adaptability and good use of resources.

2. Policy review
What policies, guidance and regulations apply to this area or site?

The policy question cannot be ignored, if only because a development proposal contrary to policy is likely to be refused planning permission. Exploring how policy can be interpreted in relation to a specific site or area should be a collaboration between applicants, planners and others, each of whom have an interest in understanding each other, reaching agreement, and avoiding unnecessarily entrenched attitudes and delay.

3. Vision statement
What sort of place do we want this to become?

The vision question is too often ignored, sometimes because the designers are thinking about buildings rather than places, sometimes because no one has thought that there is any alternative than to respond blindly to the pressure of events.
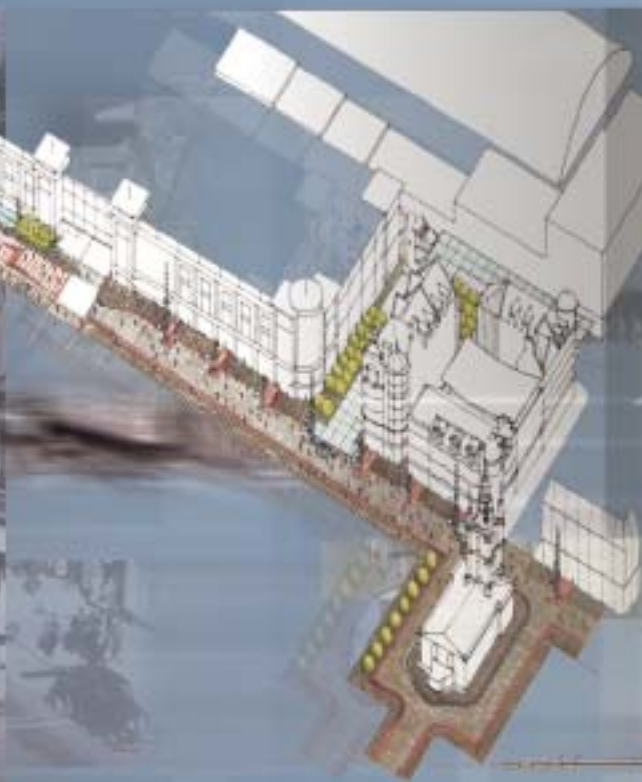
4. Feasibility appraisal
What use or uses are realistic and achievable in view of legal, economic and market conditions?

This question does not imply that the market will support only more of the same sort of development as has been built in the past. Good design should have a positive effect on what is possible to achieve.

5. Planning and design principles
On what planning and design principles should development be based?

Planning and design principles are a means of thinking about and discussing the basic ideas on which a design is or will be based, without getting involved unnecessarily in the detail of the design.

6. The development process
What processes should be followed in developing the place?

The issues covered and the level of detail will depend on the particular kind of planning tool: for example, whether it is an initial development brief or a master plan. The processes of public participation and stakeholder collaboration must be carefully planned. Other possible issues include site disposal, development phasing and management.

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1: Buchanan Street, Glasgow

Collaboration

The planning process will support good design only if the issues are made comprehensible to a range of people with little or no design training. That includes many of the councillors and council officers who operate the planning system locally, the people they deal with, such as developers and their agents, people who make their living drawing plans, community organisations, interest groups and many more.

Planners and urban designers have developed a specialised language for discussing their subject. They talk about nodes, permeability, imageability, natural surveillance and hierarchies of spaces. This language excludes many of the people who should be involved in the process of planning for design.

Local authorities, partnerships and developers too often provide an opportunity for the public to become involved at too late a stage, in a way that makes little sense in relation to the timing and substance of the development process. The result is likely to be unnecessary frustration and delay for everyone.

The process of preparing planning and design guidance can provide an effective means of involving people earlier and in a meaningful way. A programme of public participation and collaboration needs to be carefully planned, ensuring that the timing is right and that the necessary skills and resources are made available.

The planning process will support good design

support

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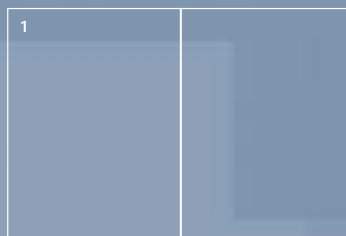
1: The Hays, Craigmillar, Edinburgh

Opportunities for achieving design quality

There is a potential for promoting good design every time anyone does anything that will, in some way, shape the physical form of development: setting a budget, laying down standards, writing a policy or a brief, drawing up a plan, instructing a designer or builder, or designing a building or a space. Appropriate physical form goes hand-in-hand with an appropriate use. In every local context the potential for good design will be different.

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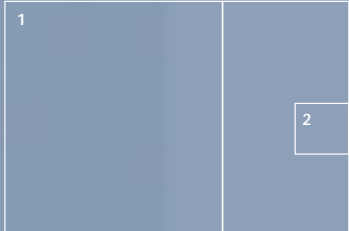
1: Coalhill, Leith, Edinburgh
2: Spectrum Building, Glasgow

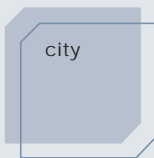### Opportunities for creating a sense of identity

Distinctive landscapes, natural features, buildings, streets, street patterns, spaces, skylines, building forms, practices and materials that should inspire patterns of new building.

town   city

Opportunities for creating safe and pleasant spaces

Places where a street would be livelier and feel safer if a building had windows, doors or active uses on to the street, rather than presenting a blank façade; places where footpaths and open spaces would feel safer if buildings overlooked them; places with potential for living over shops to provide inhabited rooms overlooking streets and to encourage evening activity; places where the distinction between public or private space can be made clearer; places where a gap in an otherwise continuous line of building frontages along a street detracts from the street's quality, and could be either filled or made into a usable, attractive space for pedestrians; and opportunities to create a sense of enclosure by enclosing streets, squares, parks and other spaces by buildings and or trees of a scale that feels right.

Opportunities for creating easier movement

Opportunities to ensure that the density of development is highest where access to public transport is best; opportunities to site bus stops more conveniently and to make them safer and better lit; opportunities to make railway stations accessible by foot from all directions; roads or footpaths that need to be better connected into well used routes, so that the presence of more people makes them feel safer; public spaces that need to be better linked into a route that is well used by people on foot; opportunities to encourage cycling; and places that pedestrians go to and from which need to be connected by more direct routes.

### Opportunities for creating a sense of welcome

Places where new landmarks could create or improve views and help people find their way around; places where views need to be opened up; opportunities to mark places that act as gateways to particular areas; places where better lighting is needed to improve safety, help people find their way around, highlight landmarks, show off attractive buildings or disguise eyesores; opportunities for creating distinctive works or art and craft; and places where better signs are needed.

Opportunities for making a place adaptable

Opportunities to ensure that new development or other improvements support a mix of compatible uses and tenures, helping to make the place one where people live, work and play, rather than having a single use and being dead after hours; and opportunities to make buildings and areas adaptable to a variety of future uses, by ensuring that they are not tightly designed to a particular use.

Opportunities for making good use of resources

Opportunities for new and existing buildings to minimise their use of energy through the way they face the sun, how they are sheltered from the wind by the slope of the land, trees and other buildings, and how they are constructed; buildings, sites or areas that are underused; building materials that are available from local and or sustainable sources; natural features that are important to conserve and emphasise; places where a park or green space needs to be created or improved; and opportunities to improve habitats and support wildlife, attracting and protecting living things.

| 1 | | 2 | | 3 | | 4 | | 5 | | 6 |
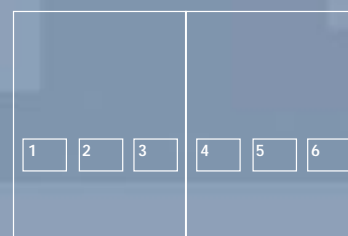
1: Irvine, North Ayrshire
2: Princes Street Gardens, Edinburgh
3: City Centre, Dundee
4: Falkland, Fife
5: Grassmarket, Edinburgh
6: Ecohouse, Ullapool, Highland

Planning for good design

Sometimes opportunities for achieving good design are missed with dramatic results. Dull, big-box buildings turn their backs on their surroundings. Lifeless streets and spaces cast each passer-by in the role of intruder. Over-engineered roads proclaim the car as king. Rural and urban sites alike are transformed into shapeless and unsustainable suburbia and land is needlessly wasted.

In other cases the missed opportunity is just one barely noticeable episode in the gradual erosion of the qualities that once made a place good to live in, work or visit.

Making the most of the opportunities is not a simple matter of checking them off a list, although that can be a good way to start and a Placecheck is a useful way of asking the first questions.

There are always conflicting interests and limited resources. Liveliness and tranquillity, for example, can both be valued qualities, but a choice may need to be made about which to aim for in a specific place. Teenagers and elderly people are likely to have different views on the matter. Successful design is a matter of balancing interests and opportunities in the way that is right for the particular place.

What is a good solution for one person may be less good for another. That is why the process of setting the context for design should be shaped by public priorities, and be open and democratic. At its best, the planning system can help to make this possible.

placecheck

Placecheck is a method, developed by the Urban Design Alliance, of assessing the qualities of a place, showing what improvements are needed, and focusing people on working together to achieve them. Locally based collaborations use a checklist which avoids abstractions that are difficult to assess and jargon that excludes non-specialists. The Placecheck can become an agenda for local action, or the first step in preparing design guidance such as urban design frameworks and development briefs. If necessary, a Placecheck can start small: with half a dozen people around a table or a small group meeting on a street corner. A Placecheck can cover a street or part of one, a neighbourhood, a town centre, district or a city. The setting might be urban, suburban or a village. The initiative can come from anyone, in any organisation or sector. A guide to carry out Placechecks is available on **www.placecheck.com**

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1: Loudoun Hall, South Ayrshire
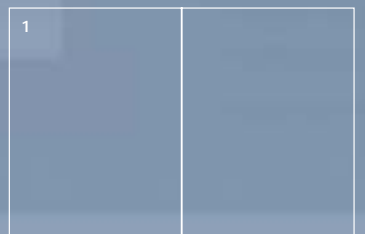
The development plan

A development plan sets out the policies and proposals against which planning applications will be assessed. The plan should be a powerful means for promoting development that achieves the local council's agreed objectives and of preventing development likely to frustrate those objectives.

Some aspects of a plan may be controversial. They will have implications for how people live, how the local economy performs, how the environment changes, and how much land and property are worth.

In particular a plan must set out the council's policies on design and the physical form of development. The plan will not go into great detail, but it should explain how its priorities are distinctly different from those of other places. Saying that the council is committed to good design, or that development should respect its context, is not enough. Many local authorities have said just that for years, without significant results.

Development plans should contain a positive and sustainable vision of an area's

future priorities

based on a thorough understanding of how the area functions, the challenges it is expected to face and community requirements

The plan must set out the council's distinctive vision for how its area will develop. It should summarise its appraisals of the most important features of the area's character and identity.

The plan should also set out key design policies relating to issues that are particularly important locally, and to specific areas and sites where change is expected. It should explain how the planning process should deal with design, such as by specifying where urban design frameworks are needed and in what circumstances a development brief should be prepared.

The plan should specify what degree of detail will be expected in planning and design guidance; in what degree of detail proposals should be presented at different stages in the planning application process; and in what circumstances planning application design statements will be needed, for example, in relation to particular types of development of more than a specified size. It should also specify which areas or sites need guidance with the status of supplementary planning guidance and how guidance should be prepared.

An effective plan will set out concisely the local authority's priorities in relation to design, leaving the detail to be provided in guidance documents.

The aim is to provide a land use framework within which

investment & development

can take place with confidence

Planning and design guidance

An important function of the plan is to provide the basis for more detailed guidance on how its policies should be implemented in specific areas and sites. Unless the plan is supported by well conceived *supplementary planning guidance* (SPG*)*, it is likely to have little effect on what is actually built.

SPG is additional advice provided by the local authority on a particular topic, explaining policies in a development plan. SPG includes urban design frameworks, development briefs, master plans and design guides. It must be consistent with the plan, prepared in consultation with the public and formally approved by the council. SPG status gives guidance considerable weight as a material consideration in the planning process.

Such guidance can be prepared by local authorities, landowners, developers, regeneration partnerships, development agencies, and business and community organisations, individually or jointly. Its clarity should benefit all of them. The best guidance will involve all relevant parties, whoever is formally responsible for it.

The choice of the appropriate type of guidance will depend on its purpose; on the stage of the planning and development process in relation to that particular site or area; and on the resources and skills available for preparing it. Those criteria will help determine who will prepare the guidance; who else needs to be involved; by what processes it will be prepared; and what formal status it will have.

The best of Scotland's tradition of making successful places was the result of a variety of designers or builders working with a degree of freedom within a framework of rules. These rules governed such matters as the layout of an area, the size of plots, the height of buildings, building materials and the line of building frontages. Sometimes the controls were set out by a landowner wanting to ensure that the value of the estate was not compromised by messy, thoughtless or substandard development. In other cases they were embodied in municipal building regulations motivated by requirements of public health, by architectural vision and by civic pride.

Those traditional controls may no longer operate, having been replaced by the planning system. Their legacy, however, convinces us that shaping the setting for life in cities, towns and villages in the modern age depends on us devising frameworks of our own. A range of possibilities exists. We must tailor them to whatever is appropriate in the circumstances and at the particular stage in the design, planning and development process.

Using the toolkit

Among the most effective tools for planning and urban design guidance are urban design frameworks (for areas of change), development briefs (for significant sites), master plans (for sites where a degree of certainty is possible), design guides (for sensitive areas or on specific topics) and design codes (where a degree of prescription is appropriate). As people use a variety of different and inconsistent terms for such documents, it is wise always to explain what is intended in a particular case.

Different types of guidance are often closely linked. An urban design framework for an area may be elaborated by development briefs or master plans for several specific sites. A development brief may be expanded into a master plan by an organisation, such as a developer or partnership,

that owns the site or controls the development process. A design code is likely to be part of, or associated with, a development brief or a master plan which sets out the design principles that the code elaborates.

Urban design frameworks

Detailed thinking about urban design begins with areas where there is a particular need to control, guide and promote change. Documents called urban design frameworks show how planning and design policies should be implemented, and what principles should be followed by developers and their designers.

Development briefs

Guidance on how planning and design policies should be implemented on a specific site of significant size or sensitivity is set out in a development brief (combining what used to be described as design briefs and planning briefs). Development briefs should be widely used, with as much or little detail as is appropriate in view of the nature of the site and the likely uses. Every development brief will set out the main planning and design principles on which development of the site will be based. In some cases it will be appropriate to go into more detail.
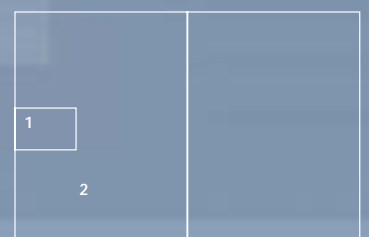
Master plans

A master plan is a document that usually comes later in the development process than either an urban design framework or development brief. A master plan explains how a site or a series of sites will be developed, describing and illustrating the proposed urban form in three dimensions. It should explain how that form will achieve the intended vision for the place, describing how the proposal will be implemented, and setting out the costs, phasing and timing of development. A master plan will usually be prepared by or on behalf of an organisation that owns the site or controls the development process.

Design guides

A design guide provides guidance on how development can be carried out in accordance with the development plan, or sometimes with the planning and design policies of some other organisation. A local authority design guide will often relate to a specific topic such as conservation areas, shopfronts or house extensions.

master plan

Master plan is the most commonly used term for design and planning guidance. Master plans can give coherence and a strong sense of place to an unpromising brownfield site

1: Granton, Edinburgh
2: Granton Master Plan, Edinburgh

Development control

NPPG 1 (Revised 2000) makes it clear that design is a *material consideration* in determining planning applications. A council may refuse an application, and defend the refusal at appeal, solely on design grounds.

Planning authorities should provide guidance on the circumstances in which *design statements* must be submitted with planning applications. These will explain the design principles on which the development proposal is based, and how the proposal meets the requirements of planning policy and guidance.

A landowner or developer intending to apply for planning permission may also submit a design statement to the council at an earlier stage in the planning process. This gives the council a chance to respond to the design principles, and either endorse them (giving the developer the assurance that those principles will not be rejected when the planning application is finally submitted) or reject them (saving the developer the time and cost of abortive design work).

design

Design is a material consideration in determining planning applications

village   city

1

2

1 & 2: Graham Square, Glasgow

In the development control process a local authority decides, on a consistent basis, whether and with what conditions, a proposal for development should be granted planning permission. Development control is a key to a council's ability to guide and control the quality of what gets built.

Too often planning is reactive and negative, merely telling prospective developers what they cannot do. It is accused of imposing unnecessary costs and delays on applicants. At its best it is positive, taking the initiative in helping developers to draw up proposals that will meet the requirements of policy, respond to the local context and prove to be economically feasible. Developers understand that they must work within the constraints of public policy. What they want is help in finding their way through the planning process. They are looking for as much certainty as possible about what will be asked of them, as early as possible in the process.

The best way of creating these conditions is through a development plan with well conceived design policies, through supplementary planning guidance and through a development control service run by people committed to good design.

Planning authorities have a key role to play in establishing standards and raising aspirations. They must have access to the necessary skills of the urban designer, architect, landscape architect, conservation officer and engineer, all of whom can have a role in shaping development for the better.

External review

Standards of design can be raised by providing opportunities for development proposals and design guidance to be discussed or assessed by people beyond the immediate planning process. These may include members of the public, local amenity or action groups, national amenity groups and national review bodies. In particular local authorities should seek advice from the Royal Fine Arts Commission for Scotland.

village

standards

Planning authorities have a key role to play in establishing standards and raising aspirations

rural   city

1

2
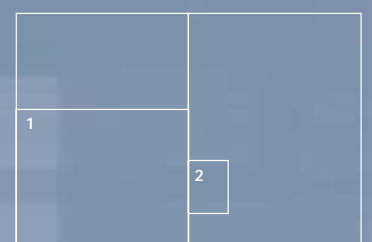
1 & 2: Crichton, Dumfries and Galloway

Local design awards

Local design awards for buildings and places can help to raise awareness and expectations.

Design competitions

A design competition can sometimes be a good way of finding the designer or the design for an important site. Competitions work well only if they are carefully conceived and managed. A competition is only as good as the brief that competitors are given and competitors must know the exact terms on which they are competing.

awards

Local design awards for buildings and places can help to raise awareness
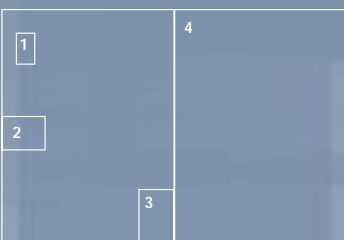
1: Planning Design Awards 2000, Argyll and Bute
2: Scottish Awards for Quality and Planning
3: Poetry Library, Edinburgh
4: Ramsay Gardens, Edinburgh

skills

More intensive effort needs to be made to raise
standards of urban design skills

Design skills

Higher standards of design depend on the attitudes, knowledge and skills of everyone involved in the development process. The necessary knowledge and skills include those associated with the built environment professions such as planning, architecture, landscape design, surveying and engineering. They also extend to project management, community development, development finance, transport planning and much more.

Preparing an urban design framework, a development brief or a master plan, is likely to require creative collaboration from a wide range of people. These will include those who interpret policy; assess the local economy and property market; appraise a site or area in terms of land use, ecology, landscape, ground conditions, social factors, history, archaeology, urban form and transport; manage and facilitate a participative process; draft and illustrate design principles; and programme the development process. Those who take the lead in this work should be those who are skilled in promoting collaboration among professionals and everyone who has a hand in shaping our cities, towns and villages.

More intensive effort needs to be made to raise standards of urban design skills.

47

city

town

village

1

Professional training

There is scope for the quality of generalist and specialist professional training to be improved. Planners, architects, landscape architects, engineers and surveyors should be encouraged to study urban design at postgraduate level. Some will become professional urban designers. Others will gain a new perspective on how to practise their own specialisms.

Future generations of built environment professionals will need different ways of working to those of the past. They must have a deep understanding of how towns and cities work and how urban design can cope with complexity. Working collaboratively must become second nature to them. Some of them will come from other backgrounds and illuminate the subject with their own distinctive outlook and experience.

It is essential that urban design is included in the education and training curriculum for all the built environment professions. Continuous professional development should introduce a wide range of professionals to the essentials of urban design and should provide others with a high level of skills. Awareness raising and skills training should not be confused – a one day course cannot make a planner, an engineer or an architect into an urban designer.

Improving skills and raising awareness of the value of good design is as important in the private sector as it is in the public sector.

Local authorities

Local authority officers need to become more skilled and more aware of how design can help fulfil their corporate aims. A number of councils already support their staff in taking design courses. Every planning authority needs, ideally, to have an urban design team with a range of skills, including landscape architecture. At the least, it should have one member of staff with an urban design qualification or skills. Training should also be provided for councillors to help them become aware of the importance of design and the impact of their decisions.

Public bodies

Every public body commissioning a new development or otherwise influencing the design of places will be expected to demonstrate how it has raised standards. It should also consider nominating a design champion to focus these efforts.

training

It is essential that urban design is included in the education and training curriculum for all the built environment professions
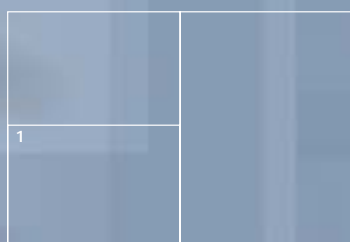
1: Glasgow School of Art, Glasgow

Conclusion

**Much development results in places of which no one can be proud.**

We need to see a different world emerging, one in which: a sense of quality design is part of children's education; professionals are trained to appreciate the complexity of places; the planning system is used creatively to set frameworks for development; developers know that the effort they put into coming up with a good design will be appreciated; and where bad design is no longer acceptable.

This policy statement has outlined a shift in attitudes, expectations and practices that is already under way. Everyone involved in development can play a part in designing places.

good design
will be appreciated
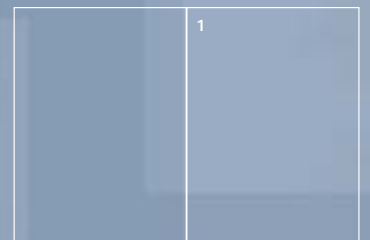
1: New Parliament Building Visitor Centre, Edinburgh

Acknowledgements