

Design Review is a respected method of improving the quality of built environment development proposals. A panel of experts from a wide range of built environment disciplines examine scheme proposals in the presence of their proponents, regeneration agencies and the local planning authority, and offer constructive and impartial advice (see www.placesmatter.co.uk). These comments are then written into a report which can be used by developers, local authorities and architects to develop the design of the project.

Design Review is entered into by agreement at an early stage in the development process. It aims to be constructive in its recommendations; therefore, we suggest that projects come to us at the pre-planning application stage when there is still scope for discussion and possible change. If the scheme is submitted at a pre planning stage there is a more open minded attitude to the comments made and a greater willingness to take them on board.

Our Design Review Manager, Charlotte Myhrum, is keen to consider all design related projects including public art, housing, infrastructure, public realm, industrial, commercial and mixed use. To date, the Places Matter! Design Review panel has reviewed schemes from most of the 42 Authorities in the Northwest. We have commented on a wide range of schemes, from BSF Schools to bridges and other infrastructure, housing developments to parks, public spaces and visitor centres – we are looking at every type of project whether it be a redevelopment or a brand new building or proposal, master plan or strategic design document.

We actively encourage the built environment sector in the Northwest to take part in the process by either bringing forward schemes which may benefit from Design Review or attending as observer at one of the sessions, to experience the process for themselves and consider whether the service may become a useful tool as part of a wider consultation process for projects in their area. Design Review is free to the user and feedback is given in the form of a report dispatched within 10 working days of the Design Review panel meeting.

Our upcoming Design Review dates (which are provisional and subject to change) are listed below:

6th **December** 2011

10th **January** 2012

7th **February** 2012

13th **March** 2012

3rd **April** 2012

If you know of any projects which you feel would benefit from Design Review or wish to discuss any aspect of the Design Review process further, please contact Charlotte Myhrum, Design Review Manager on 0151 703 0135 or e-mail:

charlotte.myhrum@placesmatter.co.uk or daniel.crellin@placesmatter.co.uk

The Northwest Design Review Panel is a key part of Places Matter! - an organisation devoted to generating a strong sense of place in living, working and learning environments throughout the Northwest. Places Matter! is an Architecture & Built Environment Centre and a member of the Architecture Centre Network. It is delivered with partner organisations including RIBA North West, NWDA, CABE and English Heritage. CABE's National Design Review process is separate, but complementary to the Northwest Design Review Panel.

Purpose of a Regional Design Review

The purpose of the design review is to improve design in the built environment in the Northwest region by offering expert, constructive advice to developers and planning authorities on the architectural, landscape and urban design characteristics and on climate change impacts of urban design frameworks, master plans and development proposals. Advice will be given in the context of the scheme locations and the wider planning environment.

The panel will produce reports to inform the evolution of scheme design. Developers and scheme designers will be encouraged to consider ways of adapting their proposals to accommodate the suggested changes, whilst planning authority officers should use the reports in negotiations with developers.

The panel's regional remit is intended to help encourage adoption of more consistent design standards across the region.

The panel will consider schemes of more than local significance and is intended to stand alongside both the CABE National Design Review and any city or borough design review panels. As of 5th October 2009, all Regional Design Reviews officially affiliated with CABE National Design Review to form a comprehensive network for Design Review within England.

In practice, this means that all basic scheme information will be shared with CABE (in complete confidence) and allocated to either the Regional or National panel depending on the size and status of the scheme and the capacity of the Regional & National panels. This means that when a scheme is submitted to CABE National Design Review, there is a possibility that it may end up being reviewed by the relevant regional panel and vice-versa.

The Design Review Panel

The panel has two dedicated staff: a manager, Charlotte Myhrum and an officer, Daniel Crellin. Charlotte and Dan are part of the Places Matter! Team managed by Annie Atkins. Places Matter! aims to improve design standards through a variety of projects over the coming two years and reports to RIBA Northwest & funding bodies. The Panel is made up of a diverse pool of national, regional and local experts in the field of built environment design, and also has a representative of English Heritage as a contributing observer / advisor to the panel. The position of the Chair for 2009 – 2011 is held by Martin Stockley who has worked in the Engineering & Construction industry since 1971 and is Managing Director of Manchester & London based consultancy firm Martin Stockley Associates. He sits on various other Design review panels including the CABE Schools Design Review panel and is a CABE Enabler.

The panel meets on a monthly basis in locations throughout the Northwest, ensuring that all counties and metropolitan areas are visited to help spread the message of good design throughout the region. Observers from the sector are encouraged for the same purposes.

Different Types of Review

There are two ways in which a scheme can be reviewed.

The first type of review is a full panel review, requiring scheme proponents to attend and present the project to a full panel of 4 members plus the Chair. This type of review is used for schemes that the panel have not seen before of a medium to large scale or smaller schemes which fall within specialist planning policy or have a large impact on their surroundings.

The second type of review is an internal panel review, which is a paper-based review not requiring the attendance of scheme proponents. This type of review is used for schemes which have already been seen at full panel when they have developed into their next iteration. An internal review is also appropriate for smaller schemes which do not fall within specialist planning policy and have a small to medium impact on their surroundings.

Preparation for a Full Panel Review

It will normally be the responsibility of the designer to provide sufficient information, in the form of up to 6 A1 illustrative boards, to enable the Panel to arrive at a fully informed view of the proposal concerned. The designer should prepare a presentation of no more than 20 minutes and the illustrative materials and the presentation should explain the design in its context.

Other contributors to the presentation should be the local authority representative, the client and any other professional involved in the design of the project, where appropriate. The presentation should, however, remain at 20 minutes regardless of the number of presenters.

During the Full Panel review

The review will usually last an hour and 15 minutes and will start with a 20 minute presentation by one representative of the design team, followed by 45 minutes of questions and views from the five members of the panel. The two design review staff will take notes of the meeting, so that a letter summarising the panel's views can be produced for distribution to those present. A few observers from the local area may be in attendance, but will not contribute to the discussion. These observers are there to understand the process rather than to participate in the review. The Chair will then summarise the panel's views within the last 10 minutes of the review and although scheme representatives are welcome to stay for tea and coffee or lunch depending on the schedule, we would ask that they leave in good time for the next presentation to be set up.

Preparation for an Internal Review

An internal review requires a pro-forma to be completed and accompanying materials submitted to the Places Matter! staff team, along with a narrative of the development of the project. Where the scheme returns to Design Review in its second iteration, a

narrative addressing the panels previous comments will be required. Once this information is received, an internal Design Review will be organised within 3 weeks of that date, unless there is already an internal review scheduled.

After the Review

The Places Matter! Design Review team will produce a report in conjunction with the Panel Chair, giving the panel's considered views on the scheme and offering constructive advice on how it might be improved. This report will be circulated to the lead representative from the presenting team, the client and the local authority. Please refer to Appendix A, Confidentiality Policy.

Local Planning Authorities, regeneration agencies, scheme sponsors and the design team should consider any recommendations to change schemes made by the panel and discuss them.

Subsequently, the planning officer should include in planning committee reports the views of the panel, a reasoned response to them, and any changes to the proposals resulting from negotiated or volunteered modifications. It would be appreciated if the planning officer could also report the outcome of the planning process to the Places Matter! team.

Freedom of Information

The activity of the panel will comply with the Freedom of Information Act 2000, Please refer to Appendix A, Confidentiality Policy.

Declaration of interests

Panel members and staff will be required to declare any interests in advance of meetings, in accordance with Appendix B, Conflicts of Interest.

Presenters Notes

Introduction

These notes have been drawn up to help people who have been invited to make a presentation to the panel. They provide both general background and advice on how to present.

The purpose of the presentation is to enable the panel to gather sufficient information about the project in order to make a comment. It is therefore in your best interests to ensure that the information presented within the limited time available at the meeting is as comprehensive as possible.

To whom will you be presenting?

You will be presenting to a design review panel made of up of 4 experts in the built environment as well as the Places Matter! Design Review Chair. The full list of panel members can be found on the Places Matter! Website, www.placesmatter.co.uk.

Who should attend?

- Architect / Lead Designer
- Local Authority Representative
- Client

Other members of the team such as planning consultants and other design or technical consultants, may attend.

Who else will be there?

An English Heritage representative regularly attends the Design Review as an advisor to the panel and will direct his comments to the panel. Other observers may be present, but are there to observe the process, rather than individual projects. A list of those attending, together with a list of the panel members to whom you will be presenting, will be sent out ahead of time.

What is the presentation format?

Dependant on the scale of the project, the review can last from 1-2 hours, however the standard format allows 75 minutes, 20 minutes of which is given to the architect / client team to describe the proposal. It is recommended that the client starts with a brief introduction to the scheme, the aims behind it and the general concepts. This should last no more than two or three minutes. The architect / lead designer should then describe the scheme with reference to the drawings in the remainder of the 20 minutes.

Following your presentation, the remainder of the time will be devoted to questions and an open discussion of the scheme, with the Chair summing up the panel's comments and suggestions in the last 10 minutes. During this time the English Heritage Representative will also be asked for comments.

What information is required before the meeting?

The Design Review Manager will need to attend a site visit with a representative from the scheme prior to the meeting and you will also need to complete our pro-forma including:

- Written **scheme description** (in a Word document). Some of the information in this document will be included in the agenda papers to brief panel members in advance of the meeting - see separate scheme description notes for details.
- **Copies of drawings** which will be used during the review including site plans, elevations and any other images (on a CD).
- **Names and contact details** of those who will be attending the meeting with you.

What material is required for the presentation?

- **Plans**, sections, elevations and three-dimensional drawings, site location plan in the wider context.
- **Photographs** of the site as existing, preferably including an aerial photograph

- **Site Analysis**
- **Model(s)**, if available.
- **Materials samples**, if available.

There should be 4 to 6 x A1 foam core boards. One of these should enable discussion of context and how it informs the development of the design - a large site plan covering the surrounding area as well as the development area is recommended (including North arrow).

Because of the way the meeting is conducted and the need to be able to review the material after those presenting it have finished, all material should be in hard copy form. Powerpoint presentations, computer fly-throughs etc are discouraged for the reasons above.

What happens after the presentation?

Places Matter's view of the proposal will be set out in a letter which will be sent to all those attended the meeting within ten working days of the date of the meeting.

Design review considers schemes that are not yet the subject of a planning application to be confidential (please refer to Appendix 1, Confidentiality Policy). These schemes will be reviewed in confidence, with the report being disseminated to the following groups:

- The team who presented the scheme to the panel
- The client
- The Local Authority
- The NWDA, where the scheme has NWDA involvement
- English Heritage where the scheme has English Heritage involvement

We reserve the right to release our views on confidential schemes on the following conditions:

PlacesMatter!

Design Review

1. When Places Matter's views have been disseminated (in whole or part) by the scheme promoters or Places Matter's views have been misrepresented.
2. At a public enquiry.
3. As a result of a valid Freedom of Information request.

Appendix A

Confidentiality Procedure

All those attending Design Review (whether Panel Member, Places Matter! staff member or observer) are made aware that anything discussed at Design Review Panel meetings is in confidence. Observers are invited from the built environment sector in order to raise awareness of the Design Review service and not to comment on any specific schemes: therefore the role is non-participatory.

In terms of the publishing of Design Review reports, Places Matter! will not publish reports produced on schemes at the pre-application stage although we may ask for permission to publish in order to promote the service. In these cases, express written permission from scheme proponents is required prior to publication.

Places Matter! will publish all reports written on schemes which are already in the planning system as an application and are therefore already in the public domain. These reports will be displayed on the website within 1 month of the Design Review panel meeting.

The Places Matter! Design Review panel will be subject to the Freedom of Information Act 2000. Information will be disclosed as required and in accordance with that Act. In the case of confidential advice the panel would claim qualified exemption, on the grounds that disclosure would be prejudicial either to commercial interests or to the effective conduct of public affairs or both. However, this may be subject to legal challenge.

Appendix B

Conflicts of Interest

The success of the Panel rests on its impartiality. The Panel must not only be independent and objective, but must be perceived to be so by the development industry and the public at large.

Panel members should declare any known cases where they or their employer have a direct commercial interest in a project being considered at either a full or desktop meeting with which they are scheduled to be involved. They should also declare any cases where there is a non-commercial connection which might be considered relevant by a third party. Examples of this include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Being engaged on a different project for the developer or client putting forward a scheme.
- Being involved on a different project in a consortium with a party involved in a project being considered by the Places Matter! design review panel.
- Being involved in a contiguous or nearby or related project where the two have a bearing on each other.
- Being, or having been, involved in a scheme which is a rival to the one proposed.
- Involvement in another group concerned with a project, e.g. an amenity society.
- Family relationship with party involved in a project.

Notification of interests

Lists of projects to be considered at both full and desktop meetings of the Places Matter! design review panel will be circulated in advance by e-mail. Panel Members will be asked at this stage to declare any direct or indirect interests in the projects

listed to the Design Review staff team. The Design Review Manager will consult the Chair if necessary and advise whether or not the panel member should attend the review of the project in question.

The general test is that if a panel member is in any doubt as to whether something might be perceived as an interest, they should declare it.

Withdrawing from meetings and recording interests

Panel members should not participate in reviews where they have a direct interest. They may attend other presentations in the same session, leaving the room for the scheme(s) where they are conflicted. Panel members' interests which have been declared are recorded in the notes.

Declarations which have been made but are not considered significant enough to require withdrawal will be noted in the record of the meeting but not declared to those receiving advice (unless they ask).

Schemes put forward by Panel Members

Panel members may attend meetings as part of a team presenting a project. In this case, however, they should not attend any other part of the same meeting in their capacity as a panel member.