



Design Review Panel

Operations Manual

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The Purpose of Design Review

The purpose of design review is to help the Council improve the level of design across the district. It is one of a number of ways in which the Council is seeking to improve design. The others include specialist design advice from officers, the training of officers and members on design related matters, the creation of a Heritage and Design Champion role, publication of supplementary planning documents and the creation of a District Design Guide.

No one measure alone can improve the quality of design but by implementing a wide ranging and proactive series of initiatives it is hoped that the quality of design and therefore the built environment in which we live, work and play can be improved for the future enjoyment of the residents' and visitors to East Devon.

The Role of the Panel

The panel has a key role in helping to improve design quality. The role of the panel is to provide feedback to the Council and planning service on design and design related matters by scrutinising planning applications that have been approved and implemented.

Key Aims

To raise the importance of good design and demonstrate its value

To learn from good practice and highlight areas of improvement in terms of design

To feedback the panels' findings to the Council members and officers

Panel Members

Permanent Members

EDDC Heritage and Design Champion (Chairman)

Chairman EDDC Development Control Committee

Head of Planning & Countryside Services

Principal Conservation Officer

Urban Designer (Co-ordinator)

Ward Member(s)

On a rotating basis

Pool of Local Amenity Groups (1 from the pool to attend each meeting)

Axe Valley Association

Otter Vale

Sid Vale Association

Pool of External Reviewers (2 from the pool to attend each meeting)

Peter Lacey – Independent Design Advisor

Stephen Taylor – ARA Architect

Paul Humphries – Paul Humphries Architects

Maggie Bolt – Public Art Southwest

Richard Quincey – Independent Design Advisor

Mark Pearson – Head of Design South West, Creating:Excellence

Lay member (1 from a pool of Lay Members)

A pool of Lay Members will be chosen following an advertisement in the press.

Typical Panel Composition

A typical design review panel will comprise 10 persons as follows:

- 5 permanent members
- 1 ward member
- 1 local amenity group representative
- 2 external design reviewers
- 1 Lay member

In the event that one of the permanent members cannot attend a meeting the Environment Portfolio Holder will be asked to deputise.

The Role of the Chairman

The chairman's role is taken to be well understood. He/she will lead the meeting and conduct affairs in a relaxed and informal manner and will engender a spirit of open, creative and constructive dialogue amongst the panel members.

The Role of the Coordinator

The Panel Coordinator will liaise closely with the chairman in the production of meeting agendas, the arrangement of site meetings, the booking of meeting spaces, the taking of meeting minutes, the formulation of feedback reports and the organisation of the Officer/Member training.

Methodology

The design panel process will be comprised of several stages. The meetings will review planning applications based around a number of themes. No more than 3 planning applications will be reviewed per meeting to allow full discussion of the projects.

Prior to the panel meeting

2 weeks prior to the meeting:-

- Issue of a meeting agenda
- Issue of a project information pack

On the panel meeting day

- Site visits
- Round table discussion of the projects
- Summary and recommendations

Post meeting feedback

- Short presentation to Full Council meeting.
- Short presentation to development control officers'

Scheme Assessment

It is important that the panel assesses projects in a cohesive way. To help this process, an assessment sheet has been drawn up and will be included in the project information packs. The purpose of the sheet is to structure the group's comments and to develop a common methodology and language. This will help the group to communicate more effectively. The assessment sheet is by no means perfect and does not cover all aspects of a development but it is a good starting point.

The assessment criteria have been designed to enable you to interrogate projects more specifically and come to a considered conclusion. Your findings may often be inconclusive and come down to a balanced judgement. At all times you should try to be objective and assess the project as presented against the assessment criteria and not whether you personally like it or not.

This can be a challenging process but we will all be working through it together and can help support one another whilst we develop a new set of skills based on urban design.

Assessment Categories

- Submitted Drawings
- Planning & Design Statement
- Site Context
- Orientation & Layout
- Density
- Scale (Height)
- Scale (Massing)
- Building Form, Design & Visual Appearance
- Materials
- Detailed Design
- Landscaping & Ecology
- Safety & Security
- Environmental Sustainability
- Artificial Lighting
- Parking Provision
- Other design issues

Also included are a summary section and a space to note down your recommendations. More information about the assessment criteria can be found in appendix D.

Themes

It is proposed that each panel meeting will consider applications grouped around a specific theme. In this way cross project discussion is possible and a greater understanding of the subject can be gained. The proposed themes are:

- One-off houses
- Small to medium scale residential developments (typically 5 or more dwellings)
- Flats and apartments
- Commercial projects
- Infrastructure projects

Frequency

The panel will meet 4 times a year on a quarterly basis.

Venues

The space in which meetings are held is important in generating open and creative discussion. The Knowle in Sidmouth and the East Devon Business Centre in Honiton will be the usual venues for meetings however it may be necessary to meet at other venues depending on availability of spaces or the location of the projects to be reviewed.

Reporting & Feedback

There are two methods for reporting the panels' findings back to members and officers' – a short written report and short summary presentation.

The panel coordinator will be responsible for writing up a short report at the end of each panel meeting summarising the main points and recommendations for each project. A draft report will be circulated to panel members for comment and approval. The report will be issued to Councillors and Development Control Officers and it will be presented to both at Full Council meetings and internal development control meetings. The Conservation Architect and the Urban Designer will be responsible for making the presentations.

Reimbursements

No payment can be made to members of the panel for attending meetings other than reimbursement for travel expenses for external members. Lunch and refreshments will be provided.

Appendix A – List of proposed projects for design review

Meeting 1 – Theme: One-off houses

- Salter House, Lymptone
- Kevin McCabe Cob House, Cadhay
- Southbeach (Vaysey House), Exmouth

Meeting 2 – Theme: Small to medium scale residential developments (typically 5+ dwellings)

Final list to be agreed.

- Plymco Site, Budleigh Salterton
- Fortfield Flats, Sidmouth
- Exmouth Docks, Exmouth

Meeting 3 - Commercial projects

Final list to be agreed.

- Liverton Business Park
- Flybe Offices, Exeter Airport
- Dunkeswell Industrial Estate
- Honiton Business Park

Meeting 4 - Flats and apartments

Final list to be agreed.

- The Avenues, Exmouth
- McCarthy & Stone, Axminster
- Churchill Assisted Living, Seaton

Appendix B – Dates of panel meetings

Meeting 1 – **Monday March 27th 2006**, One-off Houses

Meeting 2 - **Monday 19th June 2006**, Small to medium scale residential developments

Meeting 3 - **Monday 25th September 2006**, Commercial projects

Meeting 4 - **Monday 11th December 2006**, Flats and apartments

** All dates to be confirmed

Appendix C – Typical programme for Panel Meeting Day

- 9.45am meet at the venue (refreshments available)
- 10.00am depart for site visits
- 1.00pm arrive back at the venue
- 1 – 1.30pm lunch and refreshments
- 1.30 – 3.00-pm round table discussion for the projects
- 3.00 – 3.15pm refreshments available
- 3.15 - 4.00pm round table discussion for the projects
- 4.00 - 4.30pm summary and recommendations
- 4.30pm round-up by the chairman and leave

Appendix D – Guidance on the assessment criteria

This is not an exhaustive list of criteria. It does help to highlight at least some of the issues that need to be thought about to help your overall assessment of the project and to make any recommendations.

Site Context

- Note the contours and levels of the site and surrounding area (topography) of the land
- The location of the project (i.e. town, village, hamlet, stand alone) and the type of area i.e. urban, suburban, rural fringe, rural, coastal
- The age of development in the area i.e. Edwardian, Victorian, Arts & Crafts, Post-war or modern
- The general type of development in the area i.e. residential, commercial, industrial, mixed-use
- The pattern of routes and spaces i.e. roads, paths, and tracks
- The pattern of the arrangement of street blocks, plots and their buildings in a settlement – also called ‘grain’ i.e. coarse grain suburban development (fewer, larger more scattered development) or fine grain (more, smaller, more tightly packed development)
- The pattern of landscaping and its type
- Materials

Orientation & Layout

- How are developments laid out on their sites i.e. facing the street, facing a predominant view, facing south into the sun, turned away from a road or street
- How are developments sited within their plot i.e. front garden, building approach, building line

Density:

- The amount of development on a given piece of land or in an area
- Expressed as either a plot ratio (particularly for commercial developments), the number of dwellings, or the number of habitable rooms (for residential developments)

Scale (Height):

- The size of a building in relation to its surroundings i.e. other buildings, landscaping, street widths, the general area
- The size of parts of a building or its details, particularly in relation to the size of a person
- The impact of development on views, vistas and skylines
- Consider the height to the eaves and the overall height
- Height can be expressed in terms of the number of floors; height of parapet or ridge; overall height; any of these in combination; a ratio of building height to street or space width; height relative to particular landmarks or background buildings; or strategic views

Scale (Massing):

- The combined effect of the arrangement, dimensions, volume and shape of a building or group of buildings in relation to other buildings and spaces

Materials:

- The historic use of materials
- The general palette of materials used in the area
- The texture, colour and pattern of materials
- The durability of materials

Detailed Design

- The parts or elements of the building or structure and how they are designed i.e. entrances, bays, balconies, roofs, windows, features
- Building techniques
- Decoration and styles

Landscaping & Ecology

- The character and appearance of land
- The size, shape and usefulness of open space
- The retention of existing trees, planting or features
- Measures to protect or encourage ecology
- The use of trees, planting, boundaries, materials, hard surfaces
- The on-going management and maintenance

Building Form, Design & Visual Appearance:

- The combined effect of all factors affecting design (listed above)
- The appropriateness of the design in its context

Safety & Security

- How is the site entered?
- Can you see the street from the building?
- Are there any pathways to the side or rear?

Environmental Sustainability

- An assessment of any measures that exceed the requirements of the building regulations
- Energy and water conservation
- Recycling and reuse of materials
- Use of renewable energy
- Impact of construction process
- Selection of materials

Artificial Lighting

- The location and purpose of the lighting and is it appropriate?
- The visual impact of lighting equipment (columns, bollards, floodlights etc.) **and** the light itself
- Will it impact on neighbours?
- How much energy will it use?

Parking Provision

- The amount of car parking existing and proposed (often affected by density)
- Where it is located and how is it accessed?
- How it is designed?

Other design issues

- Any design elements that relate specifically to a project such as signage, masts or aerials, satellite dishes and the incorporation of public art

Summary

- Your overall impression of the project
- Drawing together your thoughts about the project as set out above

Recommendations

- What could/should have done differently?
- How can the design be improved?
- Any lessons that can be learned for similar sites or projects?

Further Reading

East Devon District Council Local Plan – particularly policies D1, D1(B) and D5

Devon County Structure Plan

Planning Policy Statement 1 - Delivering Sustainable Development

Planning Policy Guidance Note 3 - Housing

By Design: Urban design in the planning system – towards better practice

By Design: Better places to live by design – companion guide to PPG3