



Design Review Panel

(Draft)

Enterprise, Planning and Infrastructure
Aberdeen City Council
St Nicholas House
Broad Street
Aberdeen
AB10 1BW

www.aberdeencity.gov.uk



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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, along with the Planning Advice Notes on Design Statements, New Residential Streets 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 improvement 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. At the end of the review the Chair will provide a summary of points made, if a unanimous decision has not been made, this summary should reflect the general consensus of the panel.

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

Early discussions with the Review Team will help determine if a review would be appropriate. 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 both Councils 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 guidance note). 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 by the Design Review Manager 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 guidance note)

5. Presentation to the Panel

These notes provide general background and advice to those who have been invited to make 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 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. 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 also be communicated back to the Review Team.

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. Appendix

7.1 References

Aberdeen City and Shire Structure Plan
SPP 1
SPP20
Designing Places
PAN 83 Masterplanning
PAN 68 Inclusive Design
PAN 67 Housing Quality
PAN 76 New Residential Streets.
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 and Design Team
9th Floor
St Nicholas House
Broad Street
Aberdeen
AB10 1BW

Tel: 01224 523470

Email: design@aberdeencity.gov.uk