

Planning Committee

2.00pm, Wednesday, 27 February 2019

Edinburgh Urban Design Panel Annual Review

Item number	8.2
Report number	
Executive/routine	
Wards	All
Council Commitments	

Executive Summary

The Edinburgh Urban Design Panel's annual review is provided for Committee to note. This contributes to the aim of raising the quality of new development in the city.

To mark 10 years of the Panel's operation, a workshop for invited contributors will be held in March. The focus will be on lessons learned from the Panel's work over the 10 years. The output will be used to inform any future reviews and implementation of the Edinburgh Design Guidance.

Edinburgh Urban Design Panel Annual Review

1. Recommendations

- 1.1 Planning Committee is asked to:
 - 1.1.1 note the findings of the Edinburgh Urban Design Panel's annual review and the intention to hold a lessons learned workshop; and
 - 1.1.2 record its appreciation of the voluntary contributions made by Panel members to the design review process.

2. Background

- 2.1 The Edinburgh Urban Design Panel was set up by Planning Committee as one of the recommendations from the then City Design Initiative. Its main aim is to provide constructive urban design advice at an early stage in the preparation of development proposals. The Panel's discussion with a developer's design team is summarised in a written report which is then used by both the planning authority and the applicant to guide the finalisation of proposals for submission as a planning application.
- 2.2 The Panel is made up of voluntary representatives from a range of member organisations agreed by Planning Committee (see appendix 1). The wide range of skills and experience of the Panel members brings significant benefits in terms of the insight that can be offered on major and complex projects where a range of design issues will be raised. The discussion at Panel meetings benefits from cross-disciplinary contributions and often provokes a developer's design team to reconsider aspects of their early proposals in a broader context. The presentation of proposals at the pre-application stage offers the greatest opportunity to influence design quality and to highlight issues likely to be raised by consultees to the future planning application.
- 2.3 Planning Committee established the Panel as an independent source of advice but wanted the process to be embedded within the development management process in order to have greatest impact. For that reason, the Panel's meetings have always been chaired by a senior planning service manager, acting in a facilitating role and serviced by planning officers with design skills.

- 2.4 The Panel first met in March 2009 and has reviewed almost 190 development proposals over the past 10 years. There is a requirement that an annual review of effectiveness is reported to the Planning Committee annually.

3. Main report

2018 Panel review

- 3.1 The annual review of the Panel's business and operations was carried out in December 2018 and the report of the meeting details the discussions (appendix 2).
- 3.2 This year's review concentrated on aspects of feedback from developers' design teams who had received advice from the Panel, organisational issues, a reflection on the work programme and consideration of how to demonstrate value added by the design review process.
- 3.3 The feedback from the developers' design teams and planning case officers was positive about both the arrangements for the meetings and the experience of engaging in a design review at the Panel meetings. The advice given was seen to benefit from the cross-disciplinary nature of the panellists. The Panel has noted that sometimes the discussion becomes too building-focused and will endeavour to ensure that wider place-making aspects are fully addressed.
- 3.4 Organisational changes are discussed in every annual review to ensure that the volunteer panellists are receiving the appropriate support and that the meetings are conducted in a manner that promotes effective critical assessment. The panellists have asked that no more than four members of a developer's design team attend, in recognition that in some meetings a large attendance of team members has inhibited a focussed discussion.
- 3.5 During 2018, the Panel carried out 15 reviews of emerging development proposals. In addition, the Panel contributes advice to the review of the Edinburgh Local Development Plan design policies, the City Centre Transformation Project and the Design framework for Western Harbour. Panellists considered that the range of projects was appropriate relative to the broad range of development proposals handled by the Planning Service during the year. Panellists requested that they be kept briefed on emerging development plan issues and design guidance both at city and national level.

Lessons learned workshop

- 3.6 Consistent with its requirement to review its effectiveness in promoting improved quality of design, panellists discussed the milestone of the Panel's 10th anniversary and proposed that an event be held to reflect on the value of the Panel's work. The event could be an opportunity to promote the Panel's aim of "raising the quality of the built environment, place making and design".

- 3.7 A lesson learned workshop is being arranged for Wednesday 13 March 2019. An invited audience will be drawn from current and former panellists (to represent the member organisations), Architecture & Design Scotland, Scottish Government Planning and Architecture Division and the development community. The Planning Convener and Vice Convener have advised their availability to attend.
- 3.8 The programme for the workshop will include the consideration of examples of developments where value added by the Panel can be demonstrated, reflection on how collaboration delivers good development and identifying issues for future reviews of planning policy and the Edinburgh Design Guidance.

4. Measures of success

- 4.1 The Planning process benefits from design advice to deliver development proposals for high quality buildings, spaces and places.

5. Financial impact

- 5.1 There are no financial impacts arising from this report.

6. Risk, policy, compliance and governance impact

- 6.1 The Panel operates in accordance with its defined remit, functions and roles, therefore the risk to the Council is low.

7. Equalities impact

- 7.1 The Panel helps to enhance health and standards of living by supporting the creation of attractive well designed urban environments and places.
- 7.2 The Panel helps productive and valued activities by supporting the economic development of the city by encouraging its physical development. The Panel helps to support rights of the individual and for family and social life by the supporting and creation of good quality places and urban environments. The Panel supports rights of identity, expression and respect by considering all who will be using the built environment.
- 7.3 The Panel advances the equality of opportunity by considering all who will be using the built environment. Panel reviews consider many aspects including age, disability and gender with respect to ease of movement and safety. This approach helps to eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and other prohibited conduct. The Panel helps to foster good relations by promoting the integration of new developments within the city.

8. Sustainability impact

- 8.1 The Edinburgh Urban Design Panel aims to raise the quality of the built environment in Edinburgh. This helps make Edinburgh a more sustainable city by creating an environment that can endure.
- 8.2 The proposals in this report will help achieve:
 - 8.1.1 A socially sustainable Edinburgh through the Panels support in providing design advice on new housing developments across Edinburgh;
 - 8.1.2 An economically sustainable Edinburgh through supporting the development of the city; and
 - 8.1.3 An environmentally sustainable Edinburgh because the Panel supports environmental good stewardship.
- 8.3 Although established by the Planning Committee, the Edinburgh Urban Design Panel is independent of the Council, and is free to form its own views. Therefore, it is not bound by the Council's Sustainability Policies.

9. Consultation and engagement

- 9.1 In the preparation of this report, Panel members were consulted.
- 9.2 Various development interests were consulted about their experience of participating in the Panel, to inform the Panel's annual review.

10. Background reading/external references

- 10.1 [Edinburgh Urban Design Panel](#)

Paul Lawrence

Executive Director of Place

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11. Appendices

- 11.1 Appendix 1 - List of Edinburgh Urban Design Panel member organisations; and
- 11.2 Appendix 2 - Report of 2018 Panel Review

Appendix 1

Edinburgh Urban Design Panel membership

Core membership

- Cockburn Association;
- Edinburgh Architectural Association;
- Edinburgh School of Architecture and Landscape Architecture, University of Edinburgh;
- Landscape Institute Scotland;
- Historic Environment Scotland;
- Police Scotland;
- Royal Town Planning Institute Scotland;
- School of Energy, Geoscience, Infrastructure and Society, Heriot Watt University; and
- Transport Research Institute, Edinburgh Napier University

As required (for development proposals in the Old and New Towns of Edinburgh World Heritage Site)

- Edinburgh World Heritage

EDINBURGH URBAN DESIGN PANEL

2018 Panel Review

REPORT
of meeting held at the
City Chambers on 19
December 2018

List of attendees:

David Leslie	Chair – City of Edinburgh Council	Ben Rainger	EAA
James Garry	The Cockburn Association	Charles Strang	EAA
Kirsty Towler	RTPI	Sole Garcia Ferrari	ESALA
Emily Peel Yates	Landscape Institute Scotland	Samantha Campbell	Police Scotland
Richard Llewellyn	Napier University	Susan Horner	Secretariat – City of Edinburgh Council

Apologies

Steven Robb	Historic Environment Scotland	Adam Wilkinson	Edinburgh World Heritage
Caroline Brown	Heriot-Watt University		

Summary

This report summarises the discussion recommendations and actions arising at the Edinburgh Urban Design Panel's Yearly Review of 2018. The Panel has continued to carry out reviews as defined within the remit of the Panel across the city.

1 Introduction

1.1 The Edinburgh Urban Design Panel was constituted by the Council's Planning Committee with a remit, functions, roles, and principles of conduct. The Panel met for the first time in March 2009 to undertake design reviews of major development proposals and planning policies of urban design significance to the City.

1.2 It is part of the Panel's role to undertake a review of its effectiveness each year. Progress reports have been made to Planning Committee yearly since 2010. At its yearly review, the Panel has discussions which result in recommendations being made to Planning Committee.

1.3 The 2018 yearly review which this report summarises concentrated on four aspects:

- Feedback
- Organisation of the Panel
- 2018 Panel Reviews: Work Programme
- Any other business

2 Feedback

As part of the 2018 review process feedback was obtained from presenters and case officers. The points raised were discussed with the Panel as part of the review. The following topics were discussed;

General Administration: The feedback suggested that, generally, it appears that the level of support to the presenting teams and case officers is working well and both the advice provided at the meeting and through the report is considered helpful. The Panel requested that the agenda be issued as early as possible to assist Panel members preparing for the meeting.

Action: Planning Officials to review information issue dates of agendas and pre meeting papers.

Preparation for the meeting: The feedback suggested that sometimes there is insufficient contextual information provided by the presenters. The Panel agreed with this point and reinforced the importance of providing this information as part of the pre meeting information and as required as part of the presentation.

Action: Planning Officials to revise briefing material for presenters.

Format of the Meeting and Panel composition: The feedback generally supported the format of the meeting. The feedback noted that the advice and discussion at the meeting was useful and constructive and supported the cross discipline representation on the Panel. It was however, noted that in some cases the advice from the meeting could be too building focused. The Panel noted the above and agreed the importance of ensuring that permeability, linkages to the wider area and the spaces between the buildings are fully covered as part of the discussion at the meeting.

Action: Council Officials to ensure these points are noted as part of the Planning Issues Paper.

Panel's Report/Advice: The format of the meeting report is considered useful by both the presenters and the case officers. In cases where different views are expressed by the Panel this should be made clear in the report if no consensus is reached at the meeting. Council Officials noted that sometimes the content of the note is challenged by the presenters.

Action: The Panel are encouraged to comment on the draft report.

3 Organisation of the Panel

- 3.1 It was noted that some reviews undertaken by the Panel may benefit from specialist advice, for example designs specific for the elderly. It was agreed, last year, that consideration should be given to inviting a guest panellist, to provide a specialist view. To date this has not been considered necessary, however, the Panel still considered this to be an important option given the types of development proposals coming forward. The early issue of agendas would help to identify project requiring this specialist advice. It was suggested that this specialist advice could be coordinated through Panel members or CEC.

Recommendations and actions:

Action: Planning Officials to review information issue dates of agendas and pre meeting papers to assist in identifying project requiring this specialist advice.

- 3.2 CEC stated that Architecture and Design Scotland have written to them advising that they will be withdrawing as a member of the Panel. This would bring their role with the Edinburgh Panel in line with other local panels in Scotland.

Recommendations and actions:

Action: The Edinburgh Urban Design Panel, Remit, Functions, Roles and Procedures to be updated to reflect this change.

- 3.3 The Panel noted that in some cases there are many attendees from the presenting team. It was suggested that this should be limited to a maximum of four.

Recommendations and actions:

Action: Planning Officials to update the invitation letter and briefing to the presenters.

4 2018 Panel Reviews: Work Programme

- 4.1 During 2018, the Panel carried out 15 reviews of development proposals within the city. All of these reviews were for developments that have resulted or are expected to result in planning applications.

The range of developments that the Panel has covered is similar to those covered in previous years. In addition the Panel contributed advice to the review of the Edinburgh Local Development Plan design policies, City Centre Transformation Project and Brief/Framework for Western Harbour.

- 4.2 The Panel noted the development types and mix and were of the view that during the year the broad mix of developments was representative of the development activity across the city, including within the World Heritage Site.

- 4.3 The Panel welcomed the opportunity to review guidance and strategies and requested that they be briefed on the City Plan.

- 4.4 The Panel requested to be kept informed regarding Architecture and Design Scotland's Design Forum, work programme, with respect to projects within the City.

Recommendations and Actions:

Action: Planning officials to provide briefings on the City Plan.

Action: Planning officials to provide updates with respect to Architecture and Design Scotland's Design Form.

Actions: With respect to the selection of future projects for design review the Panel concluded that no change is necessary to the range and complexity of development proposals reviewed by the Panel.

5 Ten Years of the Panel

- 5.1 It was noted that next year will mark ten years of The Edinburgh Urban Design Panel. It was suggested, for an event to reflect on the value of 10 years of the Panel's work.

Identified by Panel members identified such an event as an opportunity to promote the aim of "raising the quality of the built environment, place making and design". This could be demonstrated by exemplar projects where value has been added through the planning process, reflect on where collaboration delivers good development and scene-setting for City Plan 2030 and Edinburgh Design Guidance

Recommendations and actions:

Action: David Leslie to discuss with the Planning Convenor.

