

# Planning Committee

2.00pm, Wednesday, 31 January 2024

## Edinburgh Urban Design Panel - Annual Review

Executive/routine  
Wards

Executive  
All

### 1. Recommendations

---

- 1.1 It is recommended that Committee:
  - 1.1.1 Notes the findings of the Edinburgh Urban Design Panel's annual review; and
  - 1.1.2 Records its appreciation for the voluntary contributions made by the Panel members to the design review process.

**Paul Lawrence**

Executive Director of Place

Contact: David Givan, Chief Planning Officer and Head of Building Standards

E-mail: [David.givan@edinburgh.gov.uk](mailto:David.givan@edinburgh.gov.uk) | Tel: 07525618478

## Edinburgh Urban Design Panel - Annual Review

### 2. Executive Summary

---

- 2.1 The Edinburgh Urban Design Panel contributes to the aim of raising the quality, sustainability and equality of new development in the city.
- 2.2 The purpose of this report is to summarise the findings from the annual review of the Panel's work.

### 3. Background

---

- 3.1 The Edinburgh Urban Design Panel was set up by Planning Committee. Its aim is to provide constructive urban design advice, and to promote sustainable development and equality at an early stage in the design process. The Panel's discussion with a developer and/or design team is summarised in a written report which is then used to inform the development of designs. Advice on planning strategy is used to inform the drafting of policies and guidance.
- 3.2 The Panel is made up of voluntary representatives from a range of member organisations agreed by Planning Committee (see Appendix 1).
- 3.3 The wide range of skills and experience of the Panel members brings significant benefits in terms of the insight on major and complex projects where a range of design issues will be raised.
- 3.4 The discussion at Panel meetings benefits from cross-disciplinary contributions and often provokes a design team to reconsider aspects of their early proposals in a broader context. The presentation of proposals at the pre-application and early design stage offers the greatest opportunity to influence design quality.
- 3.5 Planning Committee established the Panel as an independent source of advice but wanted the process to be embedded within the development management process to have greatest impact. For that reason, the Panel's meetings have always been chaired by a senior planning manager, acting in a facilitating role, and serviced by planning officers with design skills.

- 3.6 The Panel first met in March 2009 and has reviewed almost 250 proposals over the past 14 years. There is a requirement that an annual review of effectiveness is reported to the Planning Committee, which is the purpose of this report.

## **4. Main report**

---

- 4.1 The annual review of the Panel's work programme and operations was carried out on 7 December 2023. The report of that meeting is attached in Appendix 2.
- 4.2 From May 2020, the Panel continued its business by meetings which were held virtually in response to the COVID-19 pandemic restrictions on meetings. This year's review reflected on this new way of working. While Panel members were of the view that the virtual meetings were generally working well, it was agreed to introduce hybrid meetings in 2024 and review their operation later in the year.
- 4.3 During 2023, the Panel carried out three reviews of emerging development proposals, two Council led active travel/public realm projects and a Council led framework/masterplan. There have been fewer proposals reviewed in 2023, reflecting that there have been fewer emerging developments of a scale and nature which the Panel would normally review.
- 4.4 In relation to future work, the Panel expressed an interest in providing advice for further town centre proposals as well as temporary structures within the city. This will be addressed by the Panels' secretariat as proposals arise.
- 4.5 In relation to integrating equality and women's safety into Panel advice, this has been part of the Panel's remit since January 2023. However, given the limited number of development proposals it has reviewed in 2023, and given these did not raise any issues of concern in relation to women's safety, the Panel did not specifically provide advice on this matter. A liaison meeting with the Planning Committee took place in February 2023 to discuss the work of the Panel and, to bolster knowledge in this area, training is scheduled for January 2024.
- 4.6 Training topics were suggested by the Panel which could assist with their advice and will be addressed by the secretariat.
- 4.7 Panel members formed part of the 2023 Annual Planning Committee Tour. It was suggested that as part of the agenda for this year's tour, time should be allocated to discuss the proposals as part of the tour's agenda.

## **5. Next Steps**

---

- 5.1 Operational changes to be implemented in line with the Panels Remit, Function, Roles and Procedures.

## **6. Financial impact**

---

6.1 There are no financial impacts arising from this report.

## **7. Equality and Poverty Impact**

---

7.1 There are no impacts on equality, human rights or socio-economic disadvantage arising from this report.

## **8. Climate and Nature Emergency Implications**

---

8.1 This report contributes to addressing the Climate Emergency declared by the Council in 2019 and helping to meet the Council's target of net zero emissions by 2030 by considering sustainability as required by the Remit, Function, Roles and Procedures of the Panel.

## **9. Risk, policy, compliance, governance and community impact**

---

9.1 In the preparation of this report, Panel members were consulted.

## **10. Background reading/external references**

---

10.1 [Edinburgh Urban Design Panel](#) webpage

## **11. Appendices**

---

11.1 Appendix 1 – List of Edinburgh Urban Design Panel Organisations.

11.2 Appendix 2 - Report: 2023 Annual Review.

## **Appendix 1 - List of Edinburgh Urban Design Panel Organisations (2021)**

### **Core membership:**

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

### **As required (for development proposals in or significantly impacting on the Old and New Towns of Edinburgh World Heritage Site):**

Edinburgh World Heritage.

## APPENDIX 2

EDINBURGH URBAN DESIGN PANEL		REPORT of MS Teams meeting held on 07 December 2023	
<b>2023 Annual Review</b>			
<b>Attendees</b>			
David Givan	Chair – City of Edinburgh Council	Sam Thomas	Landscape Institute Scotland
James Garry	The Cockburn Association	Charles Strang	EAA
Steven Robb	Historic Environment Scotland	Emma Garland	EAA
Kirsty Towler	RTPI Scotland		
Frazer McNaughton	Naturescot	Sacha Hasan	Heriot Watt University
Sam Campbell	Police Scotland		
Susan Horner	Secretariat City of Edinburgh Council		
<b>Apologies</b>			
ESALA			

### Summary

This report summarises the discussion, recommendations, and actions from the Edinburgh Urban Design Panel’s Annual Review of 2023. The Panel has continued to carry out reviews as defined within the remit, functions, roles and procedures of the Panel across the city. The Panel continued to operate within its Remit, Function, Roles and Procedures with its operation adapted to suit the virtual platform. Through the cases it has considered, it was agreed that the Panel is continuing to fulfil its remit.

The Chair thanked the Panel members for their support and contributions during the past year.

### Introduction

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 at pre-application stage and planning policies of urban design significance to the City.

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 annual review, the Panel reflects on its work programme, organisational changes and opportunity for improvements.

### Remit Function Roles and Procedures

The Edinburgh Urban Design Panel aims to promote sustainable development and equality and raise the quality of the built environment within the City of Edinburgh Council area. A copy of this document is available at: [www.edinburgh.gov.uk/planning-13/edinburgh-urban-design-panel](http://www.edinburgh.gov.uk/planning-13/edinburgh-urban-design-panel)

### Recommendation and actions:

No action required.

### 2023 Work Programme

The Panel first met in March 2009 and has reviewed almost 250 proposals over the past 14 years.

The Panel normally will carry out around 22 reviews in a year. However, since the pandemic the Panel has been meeting virtually and only reviewing generally one proposal per month.

During 2023, the Panel carried out three reviews of emerging development proposals, two Council led active travel/public realm projects and a Council led Framework/Masterplan.

The Panel noted an interest in reviewing Council led town centre projects and temporary structures.

It was noted that The Edinburgh Design Guidance is being revised and will form part of the Panel's work programme for next year.

Recommendation and actions:

This will be addressed by the Panel's secretariat.

**Planning Committee**

The Panel attended the Planning Committee Tour and a liaison meeting between Panel members and Councillors of the Planning Committee to discuss the work of the Panel including how equality and woman's safety is being integrated into Panel advice.

It was suggested that time should be allowed to discuss the visited developments as part of the tour agenda.

Recommendation and actions:

Secretariat to provide updates on the Planning Committee Tour. Provisional date is the 13 June 2024.

**National Planning Framework 4**

A training/briefing was provided to the Panel early this year on NPF4.

**Integrating Equality into Panel advice**

In relation to integrating equality and women's safety into Panel this has been part of the Panel's consideration in reviews of this year however given the limited number of development proposals it has reviewed this year and given these did not raise any issues of concern in relation to women's safety it has not provided specific advice on this matter.

The issue of women's safety overlaps with the consideration of public safety more generally. Where there are issues of concern, these are highlighted by the Panel. Lighting, passive surveillance and active frontages have been raised by the Panel in the past as matters of importance.

The Panel noted the importance of designing positively for girls and that their needs may be different to those of boys.

The Panel's presentation information template was also updated to incorporate a section on equality including women's safety.

A liaison meeting with the Planning Committee took place on 20 February 2023.

It was previously agreed to bolster the Panel's knowledge. Training for the Panel has been arranged for 18 January 2024.

Recommendations and actions:

No further action at this stage.

### **Panel Meetings**

The Panel generally agreed that the support, administration, and format of the meetings was working well.

From May 2020, Panel meetings have been held virtually through Skype and Microsoft Teams in response to the COVID-19 pandemic with their operation adapted to suit the virtual platform as detailed in the Panel's Remit, Function, Roles and Procedures.

It was agreed that from early 2024 the meetings will be held as Hybrid with an operational review later in the year.

#### Recommendation and actions:

This will be addressed by the Panel's secretariat.

### **Panel Training**

The Panel noted that the following area of training would assist their advice:

- EV charging strategy for the city as this could have implications for the urban realm
- Housing including purpose-built student accommodation
- City policy with respect to how domestic renewables will be rolled out in accordance with Scottish Government Policy

#### Recommendation and actions:

This will be addressed by the Panel's secretariat.