

DESIGN REVIEW

Updated June 2011

1. WHAT IS DESIGN REVIEW?

Design Review services aim to raise the quality of the design of buildings and places. They do this by providing independent, objective, expert feedback on the design of proposed developments. The service works through a panel of experienced professionals (architects, urban designers, engineers, transport planners, sustainability experts, and landscape architects).

Advice focuses on a wide range of built environment issues including commissioning new buildings, public realm design, masterplans, urban frameworks, policy documents, public art and green space strategies for both commercial and residential developments.

There is a range of panels across the UK, from the National Design Review Panel which is run by Design Council Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment (CABE), regional panels, sub regional panels and local panels.

The eight panels which make up Design Council CABE's affiliated network are all run by independent organisations. Each panel is hosted and managed in slightly different circumstances; some are managed from within architecture centres, some within independent built environment organizations but all adhere to the 10 key principles of good design review (see below). These panels work alongside Design Council CABE to share and ensure best practice, maintain consistency, avoid duplication and to allocate schemes to the appropriate panel. In August 2009, the eight regional panels and CABE agreed to form an 'affiliated network'. This network sees the panels work together to ensure that schemes that are appropriate for design review are seen either by the Design Council CABE national panel or by one of the affiliated panels.

The affiliated panels were identified by the Chief Planner in 2009 and more recently in [May 2011](#) as a source of design advice for significant development projects in England. This document provides information on the panels that make up the affiliated network only, but many of the other architecture centres are partners or provide additional support to the affiliated network or run their own local or sub regional panels.

Good design review is:

1. **Independent** It is conducted by people who are separate from the scheme promoter and decision maker and it protects against conflicts of interest.
2. **Accountable** It records and explains its advice and is transparent about potential conflicts of interest.

3. **Expert** It is conducted by suitably trained people who are experienced in design and know how to criticise constructively. Review is usually most respected where it is carried out by professional peers of the project designers, as their standing and expertise will be acknowledged.
4. **Advisory** It does not make decisions but acts as a source of impartial advice for decision makers.
5. **Accessible** Its findings are clearly expressed in terms that decision makers can understand and use.
6. **Proportionate** It is used on projects whose significance warrants public investment in providing design review at national, regional and local level, as appropriate. Other methods of appraising design quality should be used for less significant projects.
7. **Timely** It takes place as early as possible in the life of a design because this saves the most time and it costs less to make changes. If a planning application has already been made, review happens within the timeframe for considering it. It is repeated when a further opinion is required.
8. **Objective** It appraises schemes in the round according to reasoned, objective criteria rather than the stylistic tastes of individual panel members.
9. **Focused** on outcomes for people. It asks how this building or place can better meet the needs of the people using it and of everyone who is affected by it.
10. **Focused** on improving quality. It constructively seeks to improve the quality of architecture, urban design, landscape, highway design and town planning.

2. HOW DOES IT WORK?

Design review panels generally meet regularly (often monthly) to consider three or four schemes that will have a significant impact on their local area. The panel studies the designs, listen to a presentation from the developers / clients and their architects / design team, discuss the proposals and give feedback. This is followed by a letter which summarises the panel's views. All panels prefer to see proposals as early as possible in the design and planning process, so that the feedback can be easily incorporated into revised designs. So it is best if schemes are reviewed at a pre-planning-application stage, but design review can also be used during the planning process.

Where schemes are viewed at a pre-application stage the deliberations of the panel are kept confidential.

At the session, the lead designer will present the scheme to the Panel. The materials used for the presentation will depend upon the size, scale and nature of the project and the stage it has reached in its development and should be discussed with the panel prior to the review session.

Appropriate material might include:

- Analytical contextual plans, showing site, location and historical context
- Aerial photographs of the site and surroundings
- Masterplans, layout drawings and site plans showing existing and proposed features – including those that are listed; sufficient context to understand the site in relation to its surroundings; land ownership; vehicular and pedestrian movement
- Plans, sections and elevations of proposed buildings
- Landscape analysis and details of the landscape approach
- Materials that demonstrate the proposed user experience, including access, movement, views (from within and outside the site) and security
- Drawings to give a flavour of proposed architectural approach, details and materials
- Models, rough sketches and computer generated imagery
- Materials that explain the process of design development including brief, engagement and procurement proposals
- Details of previous projects by the designer or architect, perhaps in a brief practice profile or prior reference to a website or very short list of schemes
- Electronic models or fly-throughs

Issues covered might include:

- **Process** – procurement; consultation; appropriate skills in design team
- **Context** – wider regional; response to setting; impact on adjacent sites
- **Scale, height, massing and grain** – relationship to existing buildings; appropriateness
- **Density, use and mix** – scale of development: variety; local needs; masterplan realisation
- **Accessibility and permeability** – patterns of movement; safety; integration of car parking; service access; public transport
- **Legibility** – is it a well structured building layout, clarity of movement?
- **Quality of the public realm and landscaping** - is the landscape strategy an integral part of the scheme? Do the spaces have a clearly defined purpose?
- **Public and private spaces** – are the boundaries clearly defined?
- **Quality of architecture** – coherence, integrity, imagination; will functional requirements be met?
- **Details and materials** – quality of materials; is the design fully integrated; are materials locally sourced?
- **Sustainability** – minimisation of energy requirements; waste reduction; support of Biodiversity; recyclable materials; construction technologies considered; location and orientation?

- **Adaptability** – flexibility over time, internal & external
- **Character** - is it distinctive; does the scheme exploit existing buildings or topography?

3. WHICH DESIGN REVIEW PANEL OPERATES IN WHERE?

3.1 EAST OF ENGLAND

This comprises the six counties of Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire, Essex, Hertfordshire, Norfolk and Suffolk.

Shape East provides Design Review and local support process for good design and best practice in the East of England region, reviewing ways in which they can continue to offer design support at the local level.

For more information see: <http://www.shape-east.org.uk/>

Contact: designsupport@shape-east.org.uk
Shape East
13-15 Covent Garden
Cambridge CB1 2HS

T: 01223 462606

3.2 EAST MIDLANDS

The East Midlands includes the counties of Derbyshire, Leicestershire, Lincolnshire, Northamptonshire, Nottinghamshire and Rutland.

OPUN, the architecture and built environment centre for the East Midlands, run the East Midlands panel.

For more information see: www.opun.org.uk

Contact: designreview@opun.org.uk

De Montfort University
Fletcher Building
The Gateway
Leicester LE1 9BH

T: 07939 482 781

3.3 LONDON

There is currently no central panel operating in London.

Contact Design Council CABE for further information:

<http://www.designcouncil.org.uk/about-us/The-Design-Council-and-CABE/>

3.4 NORTH EAST

There are four sub regions of North East England divided into administrative districts. Northumberland in the north of the region has 6 districts: Berwick upon Tweed, Alnwick, Tynedale, Castle Morpeth, Wansbeck and Blyth Valley. Tyne and Wear in the east of the region has five districts: North Tyneside, South Tyneside, Newcastle, Gateshead and Sunderland. County Durham lies south of both Northumberland and Tyne & Wear and has six districts: Wear Valley, Teesdale, Derwentside, Durham, Sedgefield and Easington. Tees Valley is found in the south-east of the region and comprises five unitary authority areas: Hartlepool, Darlington, Stockton on Tees, Middlesbrough and Redcar & Cleveland.

The North East Design Review and Enabling Service

Further information on the North East Design Review and Enabling Service will be available shortly, including guidance on submitting a scheme or document.

<http://www.northernarchitecture.com/design-advice-skills/faqs/23-what-is-a-design-review.html>

If you have any further queries,

Contact: Kate Percival: kate@northernarchitecture.com

3.5 NORTH WEST

The region comprises Cheshire, Cumbria, Greater Manchester, Lancashire and Merseyside.

The design review panel for the North West is run by **Places Matter!** An Architecture & Built Environment Centre. For further information see: <http://www.placesmatter.co.uk/design-review>

Contact: Charlotte Myhrum, Design Review Manager:

charlotte.myhrum@placesmatter.co.uk

The Tea Factory

82 Wood Street

Liverpool L1 4DQ

T: 0151 703 0135

3.6 SOUTH EAST

The South East encompasses 19 county and unitary authorities and 55 districts, stretching in an arc around London, from Thanet in the south-east to the New Forest in the south-west and to Aylesbury Vale and Milton Keynes in the north-west.

South East Design Panel (SEDP) is run by Kent Architecture Centre. For further information see:
<http://www.architecturecentre.org>. and <http://www.serdp.org.uk>

Contact: Geoff Noble, Head of Design Review or Robert Offord, Design Advisor T: 01634 401 166 or E: sarah.brown@kentarchitecture.co.uk

Admiral's Offices
Historic Dockyard
Chatham
Kent ME4 4TZ

3.7 SOUTH WEST

Comprises Gloucestershire, Wiltshire & Swindon, West of England, Somerset, Bournemouth, Dorset & Poole, Devon, Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly.

The South West Design Review Panel is run by **Creating Excellence**, for more information see:
<http://www.creatingexcellence.org.uk/regeneration-renewal-article112-p1.html>

Contact: drp@creatingexcellence.org.uk
Ground Floor
East Reach House
East Reach, Taunton
Somerset TA1 3EN

T: 01823 250801

Architecture Centre Devon & Cornwall

Is now also offering a range of design support services, including design review:

<http://www.acdandc.org.uk/22/architecture-news-and-events-2/latest-3/design-action-new-service-428.html>

Contact: info@acdandc.org.uk

3.8 WEST MIDLANDS

The West Midlands comprises the counties of Shropshire, Staffordshire, Warwickshire and Worcestershire; the unitary authorities of Herefordshire, Stoke-on-Trent and Telford and Wrekin; and the seven metropolitan districts of Birmingham, Coventry, Dudley, Sandwell, Solihull, Walsall and Wolverhampton.

MADE Design Review Panel covers the whole of the West Midlands. MADE is the architecture centre for the West Midlands.

For more information see www.made.org.uk

Contact: David Tittle, Interim Director at MADE
E: david@made.org.uk

Tel: 0121 633 9403

MADE, 7 Newhall Square, Birmingham B3 1RY

Urban Vision North Staffordshire covered Stoke on Trent, Newcastle-under-Lyme and Staffordshire Moorlands from 2004 until the end of March 2011 when the service ceased to operate.

For information on the 248 reviews completed and the panel see:

http://www.uvns.org/news/index.php/design_advisory_service/raising-the-bar-design-review-2011/

However a new service is now available <http://www.uvns.org/>

3.9 YORKSHIRE

Is made up of four sub-regions: Humber which includes the East Riding, Hull, North East Lincolnshire and North Lincolnshire; North Yorkshire which includes York, Hambleton, Harrogate, North Yorkshire, Northallerton, Richmondshire, Ryedale, Scarborough and Selby; South Yorkshire which includes Barnsley, Doncaster, Rotherham and Sheffield; and West Yorkshire which includes Bradford, Leeds, Calderdale, Kirklees and Wakefield.

Design Review Panel of Yorkshire is run by **Integreat Plus**

For further information see: <http://www.integreatplus.com/>

Contact: richard.motley@integreatplus.com

Arc

Offers design review and a range of other design support services in Hull and the Humber area

For more information see: <http://www.arc-online.co.uk/design-review-panel>

Contact: jon@arc-online.co.uk

Beam

Offer design support services in Wakefield and wider area.

For more information see: <http://www.beam.uk.net/>

Contact: contact@beam.uk.net

4. WHERE CAN I GET FURTHER INFORMATION?

Design Council CABE

<http://www.designcouncil.org.uk/about-us/the-design-council-and-cabe/>

All the affiliated panels work closely with Design Council CABE who provide the national design review service and support and inform the work of regional panels. They also run three specialist panels:

- National design review panel: for significant schemes across England
- London 2012 design review panel: for proposals for London 2012
- Crossrail design review panel: for seven new Crossrail stations in London

The national panel's remit, set out by government, is to review the design quality of schemes in England considered to be significant because of their size, use, site, impact on local planning policy, or potential to set a precedent.

CABE has produced guidance and several publications including:

How to do design review, Creating and running a successful panel

Design review, How CABE evaluates quality in architecture and urban design

Helping local people choose good design, August 2010

Design review: principles and practice, CABE in partnership with the Royal Institute of British Architects, the Royal Town Planning Institute and the Landscape Institute.

RIBA

<http://www.architecture.com/Home.aspx>

RTPI

http://www.rtpi.org.uk/urban_design_network/

Landscape Institute

<http://www.landscapeinstitute.org/index.php>