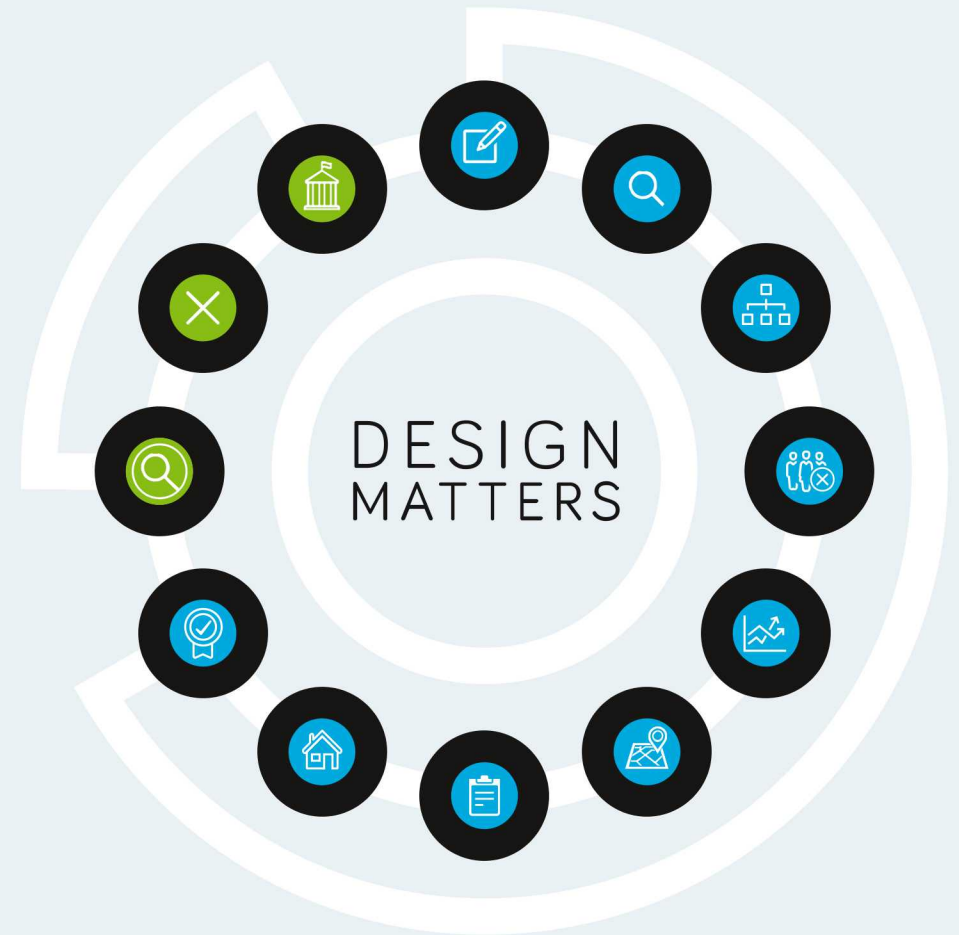


DESIGN MATTERS
PROMOTING GOOD DESIGN
THROUGH THE PLANNING SYSTEM



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DESIGN MATTERS

Good design can help us do much more to tackle the housing crisis.

Many of the tools to facilitate this are already in place: what we lack is an agenda for improving the design quality of new residential developments. Design standards are too often seen as an impediment, where in fact, when applied correctly, they provide greater certainty for developers and support sustainable development.

This document follows our recently published report Design Matters: RIBA Award Winning Homes, which highlighted examples of large scale, high quality housing developments from recent years. The tools detailed in this document

enable local authorities to demand higher standards of design for new housing in their area. We encourage everybody with an interest in protecting and enhancing the quality of the built environment to engage with their own local politicians to drive up design quality in their area.

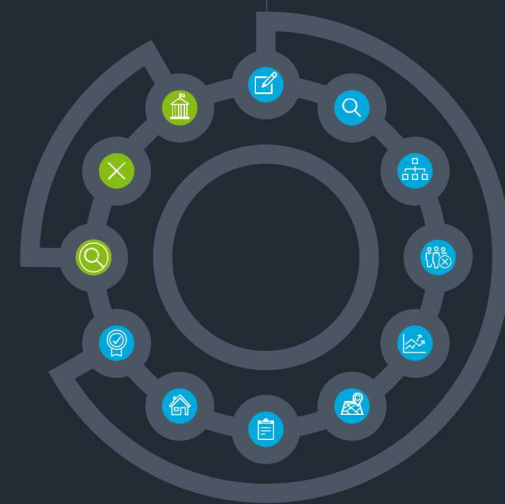
Following the publication of the revised NPPF, the Minister of State for Housing and Planning stated that “permission should be refused for poor design”.

If this is to be more than a soundbite, planning authorities need the backing of Government so that they can rely on the fact that their decisions will be upheld during the appeal process.

The RIBA and its members are experts in delivering and protecting quality in the built environment.

For further information or for support in accessing the tools available to improve design standards through the planning process, you can either visit our website www.architecture.com or get in touch with us at public.affairs@riba.org or on 020 7307 3709.

“ permission
should be refused
for poor design.”



PROMOTING GOOD DESIGN THROUGH THE PLANNING SYSTEM

12

MAYORAL CALL IN

Elected Mayors should be the final decision makers on planning applications, not the Secretary of State.

11

RESTRICTING PERMITTED DEVELOPMENT

All office to residential conversion schemes should meet local housing standards.

10

MANDATORY DESIGN REVIEW

Planning departments should be able to mandate the use of Design Review for projects that meet agreed criteria.

09

LOCAL HOUSING STANDARDS

Housing Design Guides have the potential to transform the quality of new housing.

08

ENSURING QUALITY DELIVERY

Local authorities should ensure architects are retained until the completion of developments, so that quality does not diminish post planning.

07

ENCOURAGING THE USE OF EXPERTS

Good design comes from engaging the right professional teams as early in a project as possible.

01

DESIGN CODES

A good Design Code can play a major role in driving up the standards of new developments.

02

DESIGN REVIEW

Design Review Panels are made up of independent advisers with local expertise that offer impartial recommendations and advice.

03

DESIGN QUALITY PANELS

Design Quality Panels are used to review and critique outcomes at key stages in the design process.

04

PROPERLY RESOURCED PLANNING SYSTEM

There is no substitute for a properly resourced and empowered planning system.

05

PUBLIC SECTOR STANDARDS RAISING

Focusing on effective long-term management of land over short term financial gain delivers value over time and achieves wider social benefits.

06

SUBDIVISION OF LARGER SITES

Planning authorities should be able to mandate subdivision of masterplans to SMEs and custom builders.

DESIGN MATTERS

DRIVING UP DESIGN STANDARDS

01 DESIGN CODES

A good Design Code can play a major role in driving up the standards of new developments. Design Codes can be incorporated into local and neighbourhood plans and provide specific, detailed parameters for the physical development of a site or area. They make it clear to potential developers and local residents the sorts of things which are expected from those looking to build in an area. The graphic and written components of the code should build upon a design vision, such as a masterplan or other design and development framework for a site or area rather than an expectation of a particular style of architecture.

02 DESIGN REVIEW

Design Review explores how a proposed building or place can better meet the needs of the people who will use it and of everyone who will be affected by it. Design Review Panels are made up of independent advisers with local expertise that sit separately from local planning authorities and are usually paid for by the developer. They do not make design decisions but offer impartial recommendations and advice for consideration.

03 DESIGN QUALITY PANEL

Large infrastructure schemes such as HS2 and Crossrail use standing design quality panels to enable decision making at the early stages of project development. The panels are also used to review and critique outcomes at key stages in the design process. Areas undertaking large scale development have also established standing design panels to advise on new developments. The Cambridge Quality Panel assesses schemes for how well they address the four 'C's of the Cambridge Quality Charter: community, connectivity, climate and character.

04 PROPERLY RESOURCED PLANNING SYSTEM

Over the last decade, local authority planning departments have seen significant cuts. There are now fewer planning officers working directly on cases, and in-house expertise on issues like building conservation, environmental impact and heritage issues is increasingly scarce. To address this, there are short-term fixes including the ringfencing of planning fees and support for initiatives such as Public Practice which seek to encourage architects to work in planning departments, however this can be no substitute for a properly resourced and empowered planning system.

05 PUBLIC SECTOR STANDARDS RAISING

Throughout history, public sector clients have played a key role in raising design and innovation standards in the built environment. At the same time, many of the buildings procured by the public sector are purchased on the basis of how cheaply they can be built, with little or no concern for their impact on communities or how they can deliver quality and value over the long term. By focusing on effective long-term stewardship of land, including when entering into joint ventures, local authorities would ensure wider social benefits are captured through development. This includes collaborating locally and providing genuine opportunities for community input from an early stage in the design process. Promoting the use of Post Occupancy Evaluation is also essential to determine the performance of development and whether it is delivering against its original targets.

06 SUBDIVISION OF LARGE SITES

The Letwin Review has made a strong case for the role that a lack of diversity of housing sizes, tenures and appearance has played in slowing down the rate at which new homes are built. Planning authorities

should be able to mandate subdivision of masterplans to SMEs and incorporate right to build for self and custom build. These proposals will require additional policy support to enable access to finance and skilled labour.

07 ENCOURAGING THE USE OF EXPERTS

Good design comes from engaging the right professional teams as early in the planning process as possible. Local authorities should encourage applicants to engage architects, planners, landscape architects, urban designers and others as early in a project as possible.

08 ENSURING QUALITY DELIVERY

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) recognises the problem of development quality deteriorating between permission and completion, which is often a result of the original architect not being retained after a development receives planning permission. Local authorities should consider conditioning planning permissions for major projects to ensure architects are retained until the completion of developments, ensuring that quality does not diminish following granting of permission.

09 LOCAL HOUSING STANDARDS

Housing Design Guides have played a major role in transforming the quality of new housing in London and their adoption in other areas including Manchester is a positive step. Where devolution agreements have been reached, Housing Design Guides should take precedence over national policy statements.

RIBA POLICY ASKS

10 MANDATORY DESIGN REVIEW

Currently an optional process recognised in the NPPF, the RIBA believes that planning departments should be able to mandate the use of Design Review for projects which meet agreed criteria including size, height, density and impact on existing residents, employers or services.

11 RESTRICTING PERMITTED DEVELOPMENT

The lack of quality safeguards and oversight powers has led to an explosion in the number of low quality office to residential conversions. All office to residential conversion schemes should be required to meet local housing standards. There is little evidence of any benefits of excluding permitted development from the planning process and the weight of evidence suggests that new homes delivered through permitted development fail to live up to the hopes of policy makers in terms of size, environmental performance and long-term affordability.

12 MAYORAL CALL IN

The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government should consult on the potential for devolved authorities with an elected mayor to be exempted from Secretary of State call-in powers and have the Mayor as the ultimate decision maker.