

Local Authority Urban Design Forum

Chaired by Francis Newton (Edinburgh City Council) and Matthew Spurway (West Dunbartonshire Council)

Meeting #12 | 6th Dec 2018 | The Lighthouse, Glasgow

LAUDF 12

The Local Authority Urban Design Forum (LAUDF) is a network for local authority practitioners involved in urban design to share ideas on current issues, to learn from each other's experience and to build up resources for mutual benefit.

This newsletter covers the 12th LAUDF meeting. The theme of **Approaches to Placemaking, Design Review and Assessment** was chosen by the steering group and an agenda was then developed by the co-chairs Francis Newton (Edinburgh City Council) and Matthew Spurway (West Dunbartonshire Council), with input from the steering group and Architecture and Design Scotland (A&DS). The forum was attended by over 48 professionals representing 22 different local authorities and public bodies.

Great Urban Places

The afternoon began with group discussions where everyone shared a 'great urban place' in their local authority with others at their table. This exercise intended to provide a snapshot of Great Places from across Scotland and to identify lesser known examples. Places put forward included:

- Footdee 'Fittie' village, Aberdeen
- Lochgoilhead village, Argyll and Bute
- Colquhoun Square, Helensburgh, Argyll and Bute
- Park Square Regeneration (social housing), Campbeltown, Argyll and Bute
- Loch Lomond shores, Balloch, Loch Lomond & Trossachs NP (LL&TNP)
- Loch Lubnaig Visitor's Centre, LL&TNP
- Jedburgh marketplace, Borders
- Stockbridge Market, Edinburgh
- Pocket gardens in Edinburgh
- The Grassmarket, Edinburgh
- Colony houses, Edinburgh
- Victoria Street, Edinburgh
- Haddington Town Centre, East Lothian
- Kilmarnock town centre, East Ayrshire
- Toolbooth Street and Wooer Street, Falkirk
- Falkirk town centre, Falkirk
- Muirhouse village near Bo'ness, Falkirk
- Buchanan Street steps, Glasgow
- Kelvin Walkway, Glasgow
- Pollokshields Playhouse, Glasgow
- The Barras, Glasgow
- Eden Court Theatre gardens, Inverness
- Cornbank, Penicuik, Midlothian
- Newtongrange village, Midlothian
- Irvine, North Ayrshire
- Lamalash village, Isle of Arran, N. Ayrshire
- Gottries Road and Harbour St, Irvine, N. Ayrshire
- Fisherman's Huts, Marwick, Orkney
- Mill Street, Perth
- Muirton, Perth
- Dargavel Village, Bishopton, Renfrewshire
- Wellgreen/ Port Street/ Dumbarton Road junction, Stirling
- Bowling basin, West Dunbartonshire
- Queens Quay, West Dunbartonshire
- Burgh and Mercat cross areas, Scotland wide



PRESENTATIONS



Paisley, winner of Great Town Award 2019 (credit: AoU)

Urbanism Awards

Francis Newton, City of Edinburgh Council

The Academy of Urbanism is a network of built environment experts with the mission to celebrate great places. The Urbanism Awards is the Academy's primary platform for recognising the best, most enduring or most improved urban environments. Its past winners may provide a useful reference source of qualities that create good placemaking. There are 5 categories, as listed in the headings below.

The awards endeavour to showcase a greater diversity than are typically represented in other built environment awards schemes, this also providing opportunities for learning. Notably, there is a variety in affluence and ages of the places included. Three finalists are chosen for each category and, after a visit, the judges will identify and share key learning moments for each place. These assessment reports are available as an [online resource](#). To nominate a place, visit www.academyofurbanism.org.uk/awards/ Recent past Scottish nominees and winners include:

Great European City

- Edinburgh - 2007 winner
- Glasgow - 2011 winner

Great Town

- Paisley, Renfrewshire - 2019 winner
- St Andrews, Fife 2008 finalist
- Stirling - 2009 finalist

Great Neighbourhood

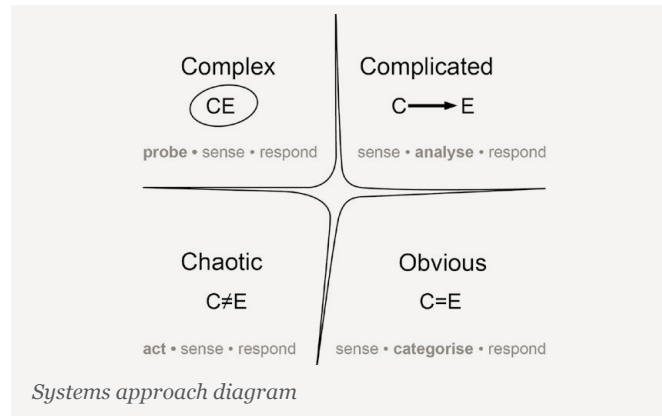
- Merchant City, Glasgow – 2007 winner
- West End, Glasgow – 2014 winner
- Stockbridge, Edinburgh – 2009 finalist
- Pollokshields, Glasgow -2011 finalist
- Broughty Ferry, Dundee -2015 finalist

Great Place

- Tobermory Harbour, Argyll & Bute – 2011 winner
- Grassmarket, Edinburgh – 2010 finalist
- St Andrews Square, Edinburgh - 2011 finalist
- Irvine Harbourside, North Ayrshire – 2016 finalist

Great Street

- Buchanan Street, Glasgow – 2008 finalist
- Union Street, Aberdeen – 2011 finalist
- Cockburn Street, Edinburgh – 2012 finalist
- Byres Road, Glasgow – 2012 finalist
- North Berwick High Street, E. Lothian - 2018 finalist



Design Advice in Scotland

Heather Chapple, A&DS

Heather explained how using system theory can help change the focus of a design advice process from critiquing the project at hand, to using engagements to change a sector's approach to Place.

Project & System

Professionals are used to complex project environments where cause (brief/policy) and effect (design proposal) are linked, but where professional judgement etc determine the quality of outcome. However, if you seek to change a sector, the relationship between cause and effect is more complex with too many influencing factors to be mapped and modified effectively. A&DS, as a small organisation with a large brief, aims to promote beneficial change for projects, but more so systemically in a locality or sector.

Growing Trust

Single stage Design Reviews of a scheme's merits and risks, however well founded, can be limited in their impact as it can be hard to grow trust between parties: trust that each understand the other and trust that working together to creating a better place is do-able and beneficial for all concerned. A&DS seeks to help parties establish a clear and shared place brief, then align efforts towards achieving that. In this, the long-term mindset means that rather than criticising things that can't be changed, advice looks to help mitigate such issues and hold up the benefits of good practice to grow confidence. Success is measured not only by the quality of place delivered but by how the context progresses between projects. Over the past couple of years A&DS has become more flexible in how advice is provided. Previously they would have looked for all referrals to warrant three major workshops, but now staff support can be offered on smaller schemes complimented by panel if a project is complex, high risk or novel. You are invited to contact A&DS if you have an upcoming housing, public investment and infrastructure project that you think could benefit from support to help set a new standard for your area.

PRESENTATIONS



Canadian Design Governance

Dr James White, University of Glasgow

James shared lessons and best practices from Canada, specifically focussing on Vancouver. The governance context for urban design in Canada was explained first. Canada has a federal political system. There is no national planning system, instead planning is a provincial responsibility. Each province is broadly similar but there are some distinct differences and freedoms. Each province is broadly similar but there are some distinct differences and freedoms. On a basic level, each province has broadly the same powers as Scotland has within the UK. Municipal plans contain zoning by-laws which set the land use, volumetric and density limits of each land parcel. This allows landowners to develop more freely.

Vancouver is a city with a design-led planning system which underwent dramatic post-industrial densification. Many of its innovative design governance methods were trialed in the 'False Creek' area, then rolled out throughout the city. The tools used and their outcomes – many of which have been celebrated around the world – have since been dubbed 'Vancouver-ism.' James' presentation drew out 4 key lessons:

Lesson 1: Write a Plan and Stick to it.

A planning policy called 'Living First' was carefully delivered over 20 years through the 1991 Central Area Plan. It called for denser residential development in the downtown, reversing its commercial focus. Placemaking was underpinned by discretionary design and build processes that required more zoning flexibility. Planners worked closely with developers, and engaged consistently with the local community.

Lesson 2: Develop a locally appropriate, replicable typology

Vancouver-ism should be understood both as an urban design 'process' and 'product'. The product is a building typology called the 'tower-podium model' that combines slender towers between 20-30 storeys with low and medium-rise townhouses or retail units at street level in a perimeter block. This typology

was developed over many years by city planners and architects. Critically, the model is integrated with generous public spaces that are delivered by the City of Vancouver through a transparent public amenity contribution process. Public and private sector worked together to develop a typology that was profitable for developers, acceptable to planners, but also adaptable enough to allow for some architectural diversity. The key principles were worked on thoroughly enough that, if developers brought forward a variation of the tower-podium for planning permission, they were likely to meet the approval of planners, thus speeding up the permitting process. Vancouver-ism's process is characterised by a commitment to strong urban design principles and an agreed vision that guides all decision-making (i.e. about streets; blocks; urban life). This is underpinned by open public participation processes. A design review system imbedded into the planning process allows planners to keep tabs on quality.

Lesson 3: Foreground skills and leadership

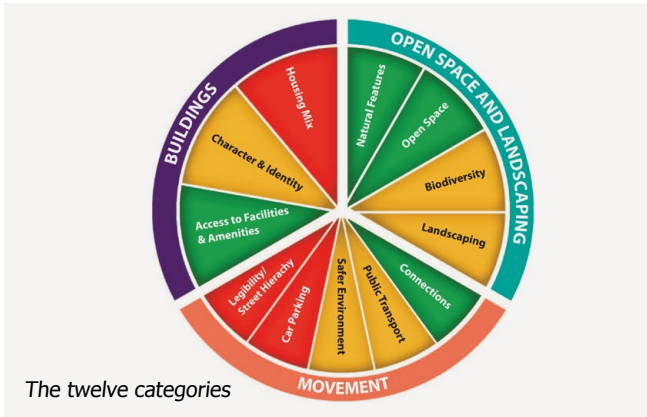
Planners in Vancouver are expected to be skilled in negotiation and mediation. There is even a budget to support such training. Public actors recognise they are also 'market actors.' However the former chief planner has been criticised for 'cosying-up' to developers.

Lesson 4: Use independent review

Vancouver's panel is an effective, integrated and valuable part of the City's design-led planning system. Crucially, the panel sees projects at an early stage. It also adds voices beyond those of professional planners into the decision-making process, creating space for more creativity and variety. The panel is seen to be accountable and transparent in its deliberations; meetings are open to the public, and voting occurs at the conclusion of each meeting.

There is a lot to learn from Vancouver-ism however James cautioned against picking and choosing particular elements from the wider system. Context is key. Dropping a new concept or process in a different context is unlikely to be an effective way of changing local practice. It is crucial to think creatively and pragmatically about how ideas transfer and translate.

LEARNING EXCHANGE SESSIONS



Moray Quality Auditing

Eily Webster, Moray Council

Moray's Quality Audit approach aims to support better placemaking by enabling a consistent approach to assessment of design and place quality.

The tool comprises 12 categories under three broad themes of buildings, movement and open space/landscaping. Audits are undertaken on developments of 10 units or more by officers from planning, transportation, housing the council's flood team and Scottish Natural Heritage. The process is facilitated by officers in Development Plans, which the Development Management case officer participates in. Around 2-4 audits are done per month, with each typically taking 1-2 hours. Early engagement is encouraged, preferably prior to pre-application stage, and there is no charge.

The multidisciplinary approach ensures up-front alignment for the council. The audit informs early discussions with applicants, helping officers articulate issues and actions to mitigate them. It ultimately accompanies the planning report and is a material consideration in decisions. Elected members are on board and have visited established sites to gain understanding of good design.

After two years of operation the audit is an accepted part of the process for applicants. Current impacts include delivery of better landscaping and connections in new residential development. Eily noted that more progress could be made in the areas of character and identity, open space and sustainable drainage. While applicants prefer to avoid red assessments going to committee, there appears to be less concern about amber assessments. Amber appeared too easy to achieve and developers rarely seemed to push for green. A second iteration of the Quality Audit is in development which will be based on a red or green assessment only, with the aim of strengthening impact. The real strength in the auditing process has been to raise profile and aspiration to deliver better outcomes and while there is still progress to be made, all services are working collaboratively towards that outcome.

Our services:

- Pre-Design support:
- Design Advice (Housing)
- Skills & Celebration



Commissioning Design Quality

Steve Malone and Danny McKendry, A&DS

A&DS believes that we need places where well-designed and affordable homes are the norm.

New service, new relationships

It has become clear that the earlier engagement in housing delivery happens, the better the outcomes. There is a need to engage more leaders and officers who are delivering housing in Scotland. To respond to these needs A&DS have introduced the Pre-Design Advice for Housing, to compliment other services and build the conditions for better design in housing investment to deliver inclusive growth. A&DS will support visioning and briefing, aimed at commissioning better places by using design to assist the ambition of the More Homes approach.

Supporting Housing Delivery

A&DS' advice services can be broadly categorised into:

- Pre-Design Advice: Client focused service building the conditions for better briefs for better places
- Design Advice: Engaging with local authorities and design teams on proposals at design development stage
- Learning and Promotion: Sharing 'what works' to inspire and inform better practice

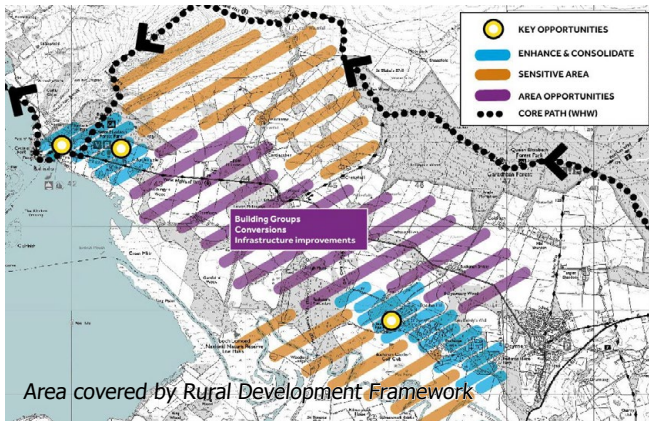
The new Pre-Design advice service focuses on placemaking priorities, success criteria and supporting implementation. Support is provided for collaboration around place, facilitation around process and examples of good built environments.

Supporting Local Authorities and Housing Associations

You are invited to get in touch so that A&DS can support your work by: scoping your needs; providing design advice, delivering workshops, client support and links to learning; sharing good practice publicly and peer-to-peer, and learning from obstacles.

For more info on Pre-Design Advice for Housing please contact daniel.mckendry@ads.org.uk. For more info on Design Advice contact steve.malone@ads.org.uk.

LEARNING EXCHANGE SESSIONS



Rural Development Framework

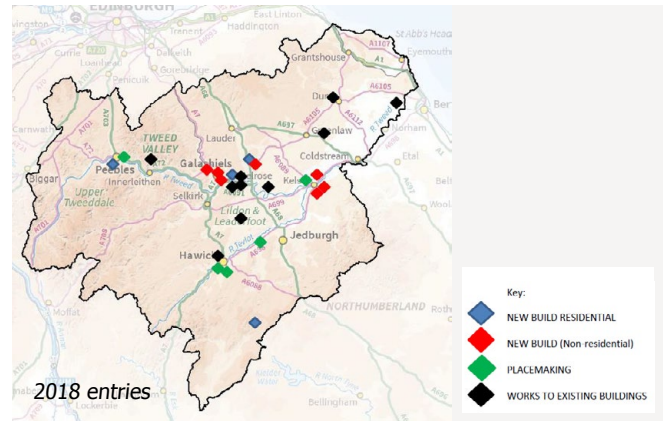
Derek Manson, Loch Lomond and Trossachs

The Loch Lomond & Trossachs National Park (LL&TNP) Performance Framework 2015-16 reported that two Rural Development Frameworks should be created to pilot new approaches to guide and facilitate appropriate rural development in two pressured countryside areas of the National Park. Derek explained that previously when a development came forward in the areas covered by the two rural development frameworks, the acceptability was guided by criteria based planning policies. However, during consultation with communities, land owners and businesses, there was a strong and shared desire to: develop more of a spatial dimension to these areas and to consider future development in the area in a more coordinated manner, rather than on a continually ad hoc basis; and to provide more detailed guidance on what appropriate development might be, as well the general locations where this might be acceptable.

The strategic frameworks aim to comfort landowners, investors and communities on the types of development that could be accommodated. A number of workshops/charrettes were undertaken with these groups, independent consultants facilitating in the development of these frameworks. It was suggested by others around the table that it would be interesting to see reports from the workshops, they suggested that LL&TNP could publish these online.

Two separate frameworks were established; one for Buchanan South and one for West Loch Lomondside with the latter being unusual in that the area falls largely under one landowner. These are more than just identifying development sites and set out an area strategy as well as highlighting design guidance for the area and identifying where there are necessary infrastructure improvements.

Next steps: LL&TNP will be looking at further developing the Rural Development Frameworks and considering how wider land management issues can be incorporated in the Rural Development Frameworks such as natural flood risk management.



Borders Building Design Awards

Mark Douglas, Scottish Borders Council

Scottish Borders Council (SBC) see the awards as part of a toolkit to improve design quality. It is considered to be a useful way to educate planners in-house. For example if a planner states they don't like timber cladding, good examples can be shown to challenge this perception. Judging is undertaken independently, with support from RIAS and the RTPPI. There is a lay Chair Person, who is resident in the Borders.

Awards are given every two years to ensure a sufficient number of quality entrants. Each round tends to receive 25-30 entries. There are three core categories: Placemaking, Works to Existing Buildings and New Build. The latter category may be further broken up to residential and non residential, dependant on the range of entries in that particular round. In most instances there is a winner and commendations in each category however sometimes there may be no commendations depending on the quality of entries. The designer, client and contractor are all given an award.

There is an open call for nominations and no entry fee. The awards are now well-known enough that architects sometimes call up to enter their projects. Occasionally a member of the public will also put forward an entry. There isn't a people's vote yet, which could provide an opportunity to build knowledge and engagement of the awards. It was suggested that if just shortlisted schemes were put to the people's vote, then SBC could to ensure a baseline of design quality in shortlisted and awarded schemes.

The running cost is approximately £1500. This year external sponsorship was secured. Mark explained how the awards were important as the projects were unlikely to be recognised on a national level but SBC are proud of them and think they deserve to be celebrated. The scheme was shortlisted for the Scottish Quality in Planning Awards 2018. It has been exported to Dumfries & Galloway whose first awards were held in 2016. Find out more [here](#).

LEARNING EXCHANGE & MORE INFO



Edinburgh Urban Design Panel

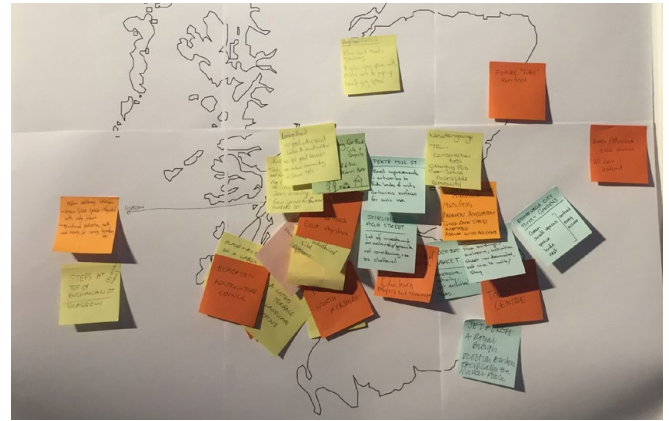
Susan Horner, City of Edinburgh Council

The Edinburgh Urban Design Panel was established almost 10 years ago. Since then it has seen around 200 projects. City of Edinburgh Council (CEC) facilitate the panel but discussion and output is led by panellists. The panel is a key component of the pre-application process for major development proposals in the city. It tends to look at major applications or projects of a complex nature. Locally significant projects are referred to A&DS.

Panellists: Membership organisations include the Edinburgh Architectural Association (EAA), the RTPI, community interest groups and academic bodies, among others. The EAA puts forward three panellists per meeting, while everyone else puts forward one. The panel benefits from a skilled and committed set of panellists; at each meeting around 90% of organisations tend to have someone representing.

Meetings: The panel meets monthly, during which two projects are seen. A week prior to the meeting, the panel will have been provided with a pro-forma filled in by the developers/designers to summarise the project being reviewed. During the meeting, the project team will give a 10 minute presentation. The panel will then have time to ask questions and will go on to identify key issues for comment with the aim to reach a consensus. This is all done with the project team remaining in the room. It is within the panel remit for the dialogue to be positive rather than be framed as a critique

Report: The report is written from an overall panel view, not a minutes-style 'he said she said'. If there are two different schools of thought which cannot reach consensus, then they will both be recorded and reflected. It will be issued to the project team within 2 weeks. It is not made public until a planning application is lodged. It was pointed out that the reports can have a useful legacy as they may be discussed in relation to a different project. Stakeholders may also refer to them.



Open Forum

The forum had a wide ranging discussion about sprawl and whether there are examples of how this is being countered. Potential for this to be addressed through 'a transit orientated approach' was discussed, coupled with more dense urban forms. This picked up on the learning point from James White's presentation about typology and reflected on whether a shift to a PRS development sector could support positive change in this respect. Although this discussion was inconclusive it is hopefully one which can be picked up by a future forum. Una highlighted the [Transport for New Homes report](#) which summaries research from visiting over 20 new housing developments to see what's being built in terms of transport and ensuing lifestyles

Summing Up

The forum gave an overview of some of the practices that are being used by members, showing how tried and tested processes have been adapted to their local context. Drawing on this wide range of experiences gave us the opportunity to learn both the methods and the pitfalls of these different approaches so that we can adapt them appropriately to support the delivery of future great places across Scotland.

Forum members can register with the online LAUDF [knowledgehub site](#) to view presentations from this and previous meetings. It is your site - use it to contact forum members, start discussions or post information in-between meetings.

More on LAUDF

LAUDF is a network for all local authority or public agency staff working in urban design. Please encourage colleagues to attend future events. The next full meeting of LAUDF is proposed for early summer 2019. Topic suggestions are invited via our [feedback form](#). The steering group meet on a quarterly basis and are keen to hear from anyone interested in contributing to developing future meetings. Contact maeve.dolan@ads.org.uk with any LAUDF enquiries.