

## **Review of the Design Enabling Panel (SCDC) and Design and Conservation Panel (CCC): Summary of Engagement Feedback**

### **Summary of suggested improvements to the GCSP design review service**

The following suggestions were made during semi-structured interviews conducted by Urban Design Learning. Interviews were carried out with the chairs of the DCP, DEP and CQP, members of the senior management team (Joint Director of Planning, Assistant Directors and BNE Manager), the two panel managers/administrators, the SCDC Lead member for Planning and the CCC Executive Councillor for Planning Policy and Open Spaces, the chairs of the planning committee of both councils, and two planning agents.

- Change name from the Design Enabling Panel to Design 'Encouraging' Panel. Interviewee did not feel the Panel should be enabling all the schemes they see.
- The Council should brief the Panel on policies, and what they want to achieve, so that Panel recommendations are directly linked to this.
- Increase community involvement. However, interviewees were not sure the community knows about the Panel.
- Increase use of masterplans, design codes and statements to explain what is 'good' for a place and help decision makers make the right decision.
- Evaluation of panel impact would be useful, especially if going to ask developers to pay.
- New local plan policies could be an opportunity to include a charter on design quality process and aims to help with embedding and improving responsibility for design quality in planning officers' minds.
- There is concern over managing change in both panels, how those involved at present will respond.
- Earlier engagement by Panels would help steer the scheme in the right direction and would be less time consuming and costly.

## **Appendix C** Review of the Design Enabling Panel (SCDC) and Design and Conservation Panel (CCC): Summary of Engagement Feedback

- There are concerns across both panels that officers are not wedded to design quality requirements. Part of the challenge of bringing two planning services together—officers should own the issue, which may need cultural change and embedding ownership of panel/s with officers.
- Interviewees want officers, councillors, panel, local plan policies all working together using similar questions so consistency and constructive build-up of information across all planning processes that can be consistently explained in officer reports.
- Important the panel/s know the questions the local authority is asking them to advise on. They should approach critical issue of design through broadly the same lens as the officers and councillors.
- Cost is not an issue for applicants - although a sliding fee scale - determined by the scale of the development would be welcomed. Would be happy to pay more for a better service where the applicant had more time to explain the scheme / longer pre submission and an understanding of key discussion topics in advance. No concern that the chair and panellists are remunerated if the service is provided is high quality.
- Some feel running two panels side by side is nonsensical. A single panel with a clear remit and scheme selection criteria is preferable. It would be more independent and provide a wider range of expert opinions.
- Some feel sharing back office functions and potentially larger single panel pool is okay – there are common themes - but need to ensure capacity and skills of the Panels are not damaged.
- With regard to community connections to the Panels, there were questions about who might be involved- parish council? neighbourhood groups? Do they properly represent people's views? They may not be interested in commenting on schemes outside of their area. A separate community panel may be better? This is something the council will have to grapple with in light of the current White Paper's desire to involve community in planning.
- In the future it would be good to see public realm and highway schemes (that do not require planning permission) at design review which have a major impact on quality of place

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- New ToR should be shared across Panels. This could include the role of Panel/s on coding and placemaking through proactive planning. Reference was made to Haringey and Essex approaches. Haringey uses a quality charter that looks at design process, context, understanding site, how scheme contributes positively to area – (or similar questions), panel/s work as part of this charter - asked to respond to issues it sets out in a consistent way – not just ‘tell us what you think about this scheme’. In Essex the panels link to the clear and consistent design guide, the issues outlined in policy and guidance helped inform the skills needed on the panel.
- The CQP 4 C’s are a useful device to structure a presentation and review and worth considering this for new ToR.
- ToR should help reach agreement over issues to cover at review in advance that reflect officer concerns.
- There were suggestions that in the future a single DRP--modelled on the DEP – would be best. This would provide consistency and reflect the shared planning service and joint working on the emerging local plan.
- Interviewees wanted to dispel the myth that design review can fix all problems. A more constructive relationship between panel/s and officers where latter step forward to panel, not back form it would help find collaborative solutions to problems.
- Some interviewees would like better monitoring of impact – understand what gets built at end of process and understanding whether this is better because of the review.
- There was some concern over having one panel. But recognition that a big pool of panel members might work – but would have to be able to focus onto very different places and schemes.
- Panel/s need good support. There was recognition that good Panel management and administration needs significant amounts of knowledge and skills.
- Future DR set up needs to be flexible enough to deal with changes to the planning system – e.g. codes and proactive planning
- System of evaluation and monitoring would be useful. QP has annual meetings to go over key themes from reviews, identify problems etc

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### **Feedback from Parish Councils and Residents associations on Design Review services across GCSP**

A total of 75 Parish Councils and Residents Associations provided survey responses:

- 66.7% of respondents had not heard of the Cambridgeshire Quality Panel, Design Enabling Panel or Design and Conservation Panel.
- 58.3% of those who had heard of one of three panels had also read a panel report.
- 57.1% answered 'neutral', 35.7% agreed, and 7.1% strongly agreed to the question 'do you find the pane's comments helpful?'
- 89.3% of people agreed or strongly agreed that they would like to know more about design review in their area
- 39.8% agreed or strongly agreed, 49.3% were neutral and 10.9% disagreed or strongly disagreed that design review improves design in their area
- 91.8% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that they would like more information about design review to be available to the community.