

The Bishop Review

*The Future of Design
in the Built Environment*

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Foreword from the Design Council Chair

02/03

Six months in from the merger of the Design Council and the Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment I am pleased to see just how far we've come in the creation of Design Council Cabi. This report couldn't be more timely; the reforms to the planning system continue to make headlines in national newspapers. From all quarters there is a call for a way of ensuring that delivering economic growth doesn't happen at the expense of the environment or against the wishes of local communities.

To many this may seem an intractable problem, but for the Design Council Cabi we see it as an opportunity to continue to champion the role of a good design process in reconciling these tensions and coming up with truly sustainable solutions. Indeed it is this point which brings home to me the strength of this merger, and underscores the relevance of creating an integrated approach to design in policy making and implementation.

I am grateful to Peter Bishop for undertaking this commission from the Design Council, and executing it with clarity and consideration for all the others working on this shared endeavour. I am also grateful to the sterling work of the Advisory Group, which brought together experts from across the built environment industry to steer Peter and the team through the ever changing waters of the new policy context. Finally, I would like to thank Paul Finch for chairing the Advisory Group, and indeed for all his support in the business of establishing Design Council Cabi and ensuring that we build a new organisation which will go from strength to strength.

We are pleased to welcome this report from Peter, and look forward to working with members of the Advisory Group and others to develop Peter's recommendations into practical next steps. Design has never been more necessary, particularly in relation to the built environment.

— *Martin Temple*
18 October 2011

01. Foreword

1.1

This review was commissioned by the Design Council at the time of its merger with the Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment (CABE). It addresses the central question of how good architectural, landscape and urban design can be achieved within a national agenda that focuses, on the one hand, on creating the conditions for the UK's long term economic prosperity and, on the other, on the devolution of power to local communities.

1.2

Few people would willingly choose to live in a badly designed house, be treated in a poorly designed hospital or send their children to a drab or uninspiring school. But, while the importance of good design is increasingly recognised by consumers in making individual choices on the products they buy, the case for good design in the physical environment still needs to be reinforced. At a time of scarce resources, design costs are in effect social costs, born by all and requiring careful justification.

1.3

CABE has been very influential over its twelve-year life. Amongst other things, it has built on the Design Review work of its predecessor, the Royal Fine Art Commission, has created a national network of Design Review, has engaged with local projects and has disseminated best practice. However, the world has changed. With reductions in public expenditure, a focus on localism and the reform of the planning system, it is now timely to reassess CABE's role. In so doing, it is right that the effectiveness and cost of design should be revisited as well as the most effective ways in which local communities can be assisted as they take up the challenge of reshaping their neighbourhoods.

1.4

In order to draw meaningful conclusions on any future role for Design Council Cabé, it has been necessary to take a far broader perspective. Design Council Cabé is only one element within a complex landscape of organisations and institutions all working in their own ways to change and improve the built environment. One of the central remits of this commission has been to assess the most effective ways that a culture of good architectural and urban design can be constructed to complement the energies of all the major participants in the industry. This has entailed wide-ranging discussions with commercial developers, house builders, the professional institutes, local planning authorities and other local and national bodies.

1.5

The brief for this review is wide and the reporting timescale has been short. The basic approach has been to consult as widely as possible and to use existing reports where available and relevant. To this end I am indebted to the many people who have responded with their views and ideas. I am also indebted to the support given to me by the Design Council and, in particular, Diane Haigh and Rachel Fisher. I would also like to acknowledge the invaluable support provided by the Advisory Group (para 3.2) and the many individuals and organisations that took the time to attend meetings and send in written comments.

1.6

Given the importance of influencing the quality of new development, whether it be community- or developer-led, it would have been tempting to conclude that Design Council Cabé could continue in its present role, albeit diminished. This is not the conclusion of this review. I believe that, although Design Council Cabé still has a pivotal national role in ensuring design excellence, a new approach is required entailing a clear partnership with the industry as a whole.

— *Peter Bishop*
30 September 2011

02. Executive summary and recommendations

2.1

Design is a creative process by which complex issues are resolved in order to produce a product that is fit for purpose. Design, when applied to the physical environment, affects everybody's lives. Beautiful places give pleasure and create lasting economic value. Bad design, by contrast, can blight places over a lengthy period of time. Good design, when embedded in an effective planning system, binds individual buildings and spaces into functional and sustainable neighbourhoods.

2.2

The economic and political landscape has changed. The financial crisis of 2008 has focussed attention on the imperative of economic growth. Capital investment, both from the public and private sector, is likely to be very restricted in the next few years. Value for money will be at the forefront of development decisions and this is likely to lead to new forms of procurement and construction. At the same time, we are in a period of significant public sector reform. The localism agenda is shifting power and responsibility to a far more local level, empowering neighbourhoods and communities. Meanwhile, government devolution is setting up new organisations to deliver services ranging from healthcare to education.

2.3

Alongside this, there are longer-term changes in demographics. Changes in the age profile and composition of the population should have a significant impact on how we design the built environment today. Similarly, climate change will impact on the ways in which buildings, spaces and landscapes are designed. The concept of sustainable development will need to be translated into real and tangible design solutions if our towns and cities are to avoid serious problems and costs in the future. These and other major issues will lead the design debate away from best practice into 'next practice', focussing on innovation in the design of housing, workplaces, public spaces and transport.

2.4

All of these changes are being accompanied by reform of the planning system. The draft National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) continues to stress the crucial role of design, while simplifying and streamlining the system. While this is welcomed, it places an even greater reliance on effective methodologies for determining what constitutes good design.

2.5

If high standards of design in the built environment are to be achieved, concerted central government leadership from ministerial level is essential. The draft NPPF is already demonstrating this in policy terms, but it needs to be seen in the context of government policy statements and capital procurement and be clearly visible in all major projects funded by the public purse. Good leadership requires a source of neutral, expert, professional advice. Design Council Cabi does not have a monopoly on this, but it can be the place for policy debate on best/next practice in the industry and thus, with the industry's agreement, act as the conduit for advice to government. In short there is a role for Design Council Cabi to be the government's advisor on design matters as they relate to the built environment.

**The ultimate
outcome of
planning
procedures
must be streets,
towns and
cities that the
public positively
love and find
beautiful.**

— Maritz Vandenberg

2.6

The real impact of design in the built environment is felt not only through major projects, but by the design of everyday places and buildings. It is from the cross-over of architecture, landscape, engineering, construction and environmental technologies that 'next practice' will emerge. Design Council Caba can play a pivotal role in encouraging innovation and disseminating lessons and experiences for everyone in the industry to use. This calls for Design Council Caba to expand its role beyond pure bricks and mortar to become a centre for policy debate and best practice that embraces the wider design, development and construction industry. As a start, the Advisory Group set up to support this review could have a longer-term role in helping to co-ordinate thinking, commission new research and share its practice and experience. As part of this, it can play a central role in co-ordinating the work and interests of the professional institutes more closely. Whether considering how to get the best designs from new development or how to facilitate local neighbourhood planning, the pivotal role of the Local Planning Authorities should be acknowledged. These are democratically accountable and discharge the process of plan-making and the control of development. The erosion of capacity and design capability within local authorities is a major issue. Although this is a process that has been going on for years (if not decades), it has now reached a critical stage and needs to be urgently addressed if costly delays and poor quality schemes are to be avoided.

2.7

As part of the wider strategy to promote good design, it is suggested that Design Review be retained as a methodology and given appropriate material weight within the planning system. This should be independently administered as a national service. Although no longer a formal part of government, Design Council Caba is independent and can co-ordinate a broad national network. Design comments and recommendation coming from properly constituted and accredited review panels should carry appropriate material weight in the planning system. There is, however, scope for a rationalisation of the present structure and most development reviews should be carried out at regional level. Design Council Caba could develop a simple accreditation scheme for local panels. Faster feedback could be given to participants in reviews. Finally, on the difficult question of funding, the most appropriate option is from development through planning fees.

2.8

If localism is to bring about the creation of better places, support will be required to get the new neighbourhood planning system to work effectively, with good design firmly embedded at its core. There are many organisations well placed to work with local neighbourhoods, but there is a paucity of methodologies and case studies to help. Worryingly, the erosion of capacity at local authority level is also likely to be mirrored by a corresponding reduction in many of the organisations that provide local design support to neighbourhoods as public and private sector funding is reduced. Here there is an important role for Design Council Caba to play in helping to coordinate the many and various parties to produce a simple and easy to navigate system of local support.

Recommendations

2.9

The recommendations are set out in each section of the report. They are:

01. To create a national design agenda

- i. The government should recognise Design Council Caba as a key advisor on Design in the Built Environment.
- ii. Design Council Caba should provide strategic advice to government at all levels on design procurement in the built environment. In order to ensure that public money is spent on good quality, sustainable projects, Cabinet Office should encourage the use of Design Review and other design support services from Design Council Caba.
- iii. Design Council Caba should enter into a dialogue with the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) and the development, construction industry and government to identify long-term research requirements into the value of good design. Research Councils should be involved in any longer-term research.

02. To develop future practice

- i. Design Council Caba should become a centre of excellence providing demonstrations and leadership on innovation in the built environment. It should jointly commission/pool research that will ensure that the value and impact of good design, from scheme to city level, is better understood and appreciated.
- ii. That Design Council Caba retains the advisory group as a forum for debate and discussion on the emerging policy issues and new approaches to design in the built environment.

- iii. That the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) and the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS) engage with Design Council Caba to consider key topic areas for further research in the areas of housing, environment, climate change, public space and the impacts of demographic change.
- iv. That Design Council Caba re-focuses its work to explore areas of emerging 'next practice' and disseminate the lessons to the industry.
- v. That Design Council Caba and government take up the issues surrounding the difficulties of public sector procurement and consider ways in which improved outcomes relating to design can be achieved.
- vi. That Design Council Caba enters into a dialogue with the HCA to articulate key design issues on housing, assist in developing policy on design standards and construct client support and Design Review systems for the social housing sector.
- vii. That discussions take place between Design Council Caba, the RIBA, RICS and RTPI, with the objective of co-ordinating their design support services into a system that is easy for neighbourhood groups to understand and navigate.

03. To achieve good design through the planning system

i. Government should explicitly recognise and reinforce the value of good design in achieving its ambitions for prosperous, sustainable and fair places within the new planning system. This should be done by amending the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) to include a Design Review process as the mechanism by which environmental, social and economic issues are reconciled within the definition of sustainable development. This would ensure that the presumption in favour of sustainable development delivers good quality schemes that are accepted by the public and ensure Local Plans deliver good quality place-making.

ii. That DCLG reinforce the importance of Design Review and confer upon it appropriate weight within planning-decision-making and planning appeals.

iii. That DCLG commission an independent review of design capacity in local planning authorities. This should include an assessment of the appropriate role and seniority levels of staff with design qualifications engaged in the development process and the design training requirements for councillors.

iv. That Design Review is retained as a best practice formal part of the development process and that the CABE model is retained under the co-ordination of Design Council Cabé:

- That Design Council Cabé maintains a national panel that looks at schemes of national importance such as major infrastructure and carries out a programme of themed topic reviews that are used to develop industry best/next practice.
- That a London panel is set up and the boundaries of the current affiliated panels including London and the south east area are reviewed.

– That all other projects, regardless of size are considered by the appropriate local/regional panel.

– That a simple mechanism of best practice accreditation is applied by Design Council Cabé to affiliated/local panels and, subject to this, their views are accorded appropriate weight.

v. That DCLG support the funding of Design Review through the charging of planning or pre-application fees.

04. To design better neighbourhoods

i. That Design Council Cabé focuses its future role on being a centre of excellence for the debate, research and dissemination of experience and best practice on neighbourhood engagement with place-making.

ii. That Design Council Cabé sets up a standing forum for information exchange between the various organisations involved in supporting neighbourhood planning.

iii. That DCLG commission a review of the capacity of local planning authorities and third-sector organisations to support local neighbourhoods.

iv. The professional institutions jointly commission a review on how design support for local neighbourhoods can be effectively harnessed and streamlined. Design Council Cabé should commission a series of pilot projects to assess ways in which resources can be focussed at a local level to support design initiatives.

v. That Design Council Cabé and the professional institutes seek funding support for a separate review to examine the role of universities in assisting local areas through research and direct project support.

03. Introduction and context

“Design and contribution to the economy are at the heart of what we are aiming at. After the many hours that we have spent scrutinising the [Localism] Bill, if there is one outcome that we would all want to see, it is that the built environment is better than it otherwise would be and that it is beautiful and functional for people to live in.”

— *The Rt Hon. Greg Clark MP, Minister for Decentralisation*

3.1

The purpose of the review is to clarify and recommend a nationwide system of support to deliver design quality in the built environment that will:

- Be supported by the built environment professions and industry
- Be recognisable and accessible to the public
- Support the national growth agenda
- Enable sustainable development

3.2

Rather than focus solely on the role of Design Council Caba, the review has deliberately looked at the role of the wider built environment industry and professions in delivering the shared objective of better quality places for people to live and work. In order to do this the review has been supported by an expert advisory group representing key stakeholders. In addition an extensive process of stakeholder consultation including roundtables, workshops and a call for written submissions has been undertaken.

3.3

Design Council Caba's remit is restricted to England. Design advice, review and advocacy is provided in Scotland by Architecture and Design Scotland, in Wales by the Design Commission for Wales and in Northern Ireland by a ministerial advisory group.

Although each of these bodies has its own identity, all run a Design Review service and their remits and approaches are similar to Design Council Caba. All three organisations have continuing public funding through their devolved governments.

3.4

What is clear is that we are all now working under very different circumstances to those that prevailed prior to CABA's merger with the Design Council. This is a result not only of a new government, but also major changes in the economy, environmental issues and societal pressures, all of which are changing the conditions within which the built environment is created, managed and used.

3.5

CABA was born out of the Royal Fine Art Commission (established in 1924) at a time of great public investment in our towns and cities. The Lord Rogers Urban Task Force Report and the 2000 Urban White Paper marked a period of high public sector-led investment in the built environment. As a public body, CABA grew in response to demand, offering Design Review for significant schemes, establishing an enabling programme that supported public sector clients to procure better design and creating a research programme to underpin and disseminate knowledge among stakeholders. CABA also acted as an advisor to government, ensuring that emerging policy reflected a commitment to design quality, and campaigned to ensure that the benefits of a well designed built environment were understood across the industry.

3.6

Throughout the period of this review the Design Council Caba team has been working with stakeholders and partners to develop new methodologies and ways of working. What has been clear from the review process and, in particular, the consultation with external stakeholders, is that had CABA been abolished it would have left a significant gap in the provision of design support at a time when the government is keen to ensure that good design plays an important role in the creation of new plans and sustainable developments. The key questions of the review have focused on how good design can be promoted in this new and challenging environment.

**Many clients
seem happy with
poor design.**

**Many poor
architects seem
only too happy to
supply it. Many
local authorities
seem happy to
live with it.**

— Lee Mallett, Planning in London

3.7

The first two areas of consideration are how a national design agenda could be promoted and how design advice, support and the championing and dissemination of best practice could effectively be carried out. In other words, how can the design agenda for the built environment be driven forward? The development of new design practice in housing, public spaces and healthier cities and neighbourhoods will have a profound impact on our lives. In this respect how can we focus on innovation and the development of future solutions, or 'next practice'?

3.8

The third area concerned the design of new development and how, in the context of the new planning system, good architecture, landscape and urban design can be achieved without imposing significant additional costs or delays. In relation to this question, the report explores the policy conditions required to promote good design, the role and capacity of local planning authorities and the question of how the existing system of Design Review can be made more effective.

3.9

The fourth group of questions concern local place-making. Within the localism agenda, there are broad questions concerning how neighbourhoods that wish to shape their areas can be supported and how good quality design can be promoted. In this area the review looks at local capacity, ways in which new resources can be brought into play and new methodologies that might facilitate and embed good design standards.

3.10

The coalition government has clearly signalled its support for the design agenda in its emerging planning framework and through its continued funding for the Design Council and Design Council Cabi. At the same time the 2010 Comprehensive Spending Review has significantly reduced spending across the public sector. In line with this, a large number of non-departmental public bodies (NDPBs), including regional development agencies, have been abolished. The government agenda has two clear platforms: one is decentralisation, or localism and the other is economic recovery and growth. The move to empower both local government and local communities will significantly affect the delivery of public goods and services beyond this parliament. The changes will impact directly on the ways in which we plan, design and manage our cities, towns and rural communities. One thing is certain: underpinning all these changes is a clear desire to move away from mechanistic targets towards real outcomes where there are tangible and measurable improvements in quality of life.

“Lack of financial investment is often cited – and this issue is likely to be at the top of the agenda for the foreseeable future. However, a lack of co-ordination across public sector bodies – often departments in the same organisation – can have a significant impact on design quality.”

— Nick Dixon

“We believe that good design must be an implicit element of sustainable development and this should be made clear at all levels.”

— *The Land Trust*

3.11

It is imperative that in regenerating our towns and cities, building infrastructure to underpin national growth and providing housing to meet the needs of a growing population, we do not neglect the importance of good quality design. A durable, sustainable and beautiful environment is a hallmark of a successful society. We have learned from past experience that short-term savings on poor quality design merely place a burden on the future as scarce resources have to be diverted to resolve the mistakes of the past. The design of the built environment, its buildings and places, is more important than ever as we face the social, economic and environmental challenges of the 21st century.

3.12

There is little doubt that CABA has, for the most part, been a successful organisation that has been effective in promoting the design excellence agenda within the built environment. CABA is respected within the industry and is generally seen as having made a positive improvement to the many schemes that have passed through its Design Review process. Its enabling and best practice roles have been widely influential. Critically, CABA is still a strong and potent brand that is understood within the industry.

3.13

Notwithstanding all of the above, there have been criticisms, justified or not, and these are important pointers for the direction of this review. These are:

- CABA is seen by many to be London-centric. Over 45 percent of its reviews are for London schemes and the organisation is perceived, in some quarters, as insufficiently responsive to regional conditions or local needs.

- CABA, at its maximum size of 120 staff, was too big to be focused, but too small to effectively discharge its brief at local level.
- CABA became inflexible and lost its creative panache as it matured. As its statutory weight within the planning system grew, so did the responsibility to comply with the formal procedures of the public sector. CABA became institutionalised.
- CABA did not fully achieve the support of the industry as a whole (the professional institutes, developers and their trade organisations).
- Although CABA carried out a lot of work on the value of good design, much of this was (inevitably) anecdotal and based on selected case studies. CABA was never able to demonstrate the value of good design in strictly quantitative or financial terms.

3.14

In April 2011, CABA merged with the Design Council. Established in 1944, the Design Council has a broad remit to bring together decision makers, policy makers, developers and educators to engage on the latest thinking around design and innovation. In addition to mentoring private industry and the public sector, it promotes British design worldwide. It also acts formally as an advisor to government on design matters generally. The Design Council is a widely respected organisation with international brand recognition.

3.15

The merger offers scope for greater co-operation and synergy between the two organisations. The Design Council has recently appointed a new Board of Trustees to take the two organisations forward. In parallel, Design Council CABA has produced an interim business plan. Although the future business direction of the new organisation is outside the scope of this report, there has been an opportunity for dialogue and many of the recommendations made here will be implemented as the two organisations bind together and develop their new remit. The scope for this is explored in more detail in the next section.

04. Creating a national design agenda

4.1

Good design goes beyond the aesthetic, the traditional bricks and mortar of physical design. It integrates social, economic and environmental agendas and can build cities and neighbourhoods robust enough to cope with the challenges of an uncertain future.

“The delivery of a well-designed environment, by which one might mean simply one that is sustainable, liveable and fulfilling, is dependent on getting the framework for the city or settlement right across all its scales.”

— *Matthew Carmona*

4.2

It is unlikely that we will see a period of economic growth like that of the last decade at any time in the near future. Economic recovery and reduction of the public deficit are intrinsically linked. In a world of limited capital resources and public funding, value for money will be even more critical, particularly when investing in new public infrastructure in relation to transport, hospitals, parks or schools. There will inevitably be a drive towards value-added innovation in design, materials, processes and construction techniques. This will open up new design agendas that are based on a more user-centred model of design, that take better account of environmental limits and that enable people to use their built environment in ways that are healthier and truly sustainable.

4.3

The need for a positive response to climate change through adaptation and mitigation is beyond reasonable dispute. The built environment is particularly important in the context of climate change: the building stock itself is responsible for over 50% per cent of all carbon emissions and the layout of our towns and cities has a direct impact on our individual behaviours and movement patterns and therefore on transport emissions. The government has committed to ambitious carbon reduction targets and has recognised the construction sector as being critical to this and particularly in need of innovation. This was illustrated through the government's Construction Strategy (2011) and IGT Report (2010).

4.4

Alongside these factors are changes in demographics. An ageing population, the trend towards smaller households and the different perspectives of a multi-cultural society will all place new demands on how the built environment is designed, managed and used. This will have widespread and significant effects. Flexibility will be a fundamental feature of the buildings we erect and the places we create. The design of housing, parks, schools and public buildings is likely to become a field where significant design innovation will occur. Emerging new practices in these areas will need to be encouraged and the lessons disseminated. This will not just bring advantages to the industry as a whole, but should result in broader efficiencies and cost-savings for the whole country. And as architects and design firms are now major exporters in their own right, the fostering of 'next practice' at home will give the industry a competitive advantage overseas.

4.5

Housing design in particular will need to be responsive to the growth in population, the shortage of stock and the changing aspirations of individuals and families. DCLG will be investing around £6.5bn in new affordable homes and in the decent homes programme. The target is 150,000 new affordable homes over the next four years. Ensuring that new housing is well designed, sustainable and affordable will be of national importance. In this respect it is important to reflect back on the many mistakes made in creation of public housing during the post-war period. If we are not to repeat them, agencies like the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA) should be encouraged to ensure that good design remains firmly embedded in their corporate ethos and their operational programmes. It is of course a given that good housing is not just a requirement for a basic quality of life, but a prerequisite for a civilised society.

4.6

The past year has seen a fundamental shift in the political landscape. The government direction is clear: ‘smaller’ government, devolution of power to communities through the Localism Bill and greater empowerment of citizens as part of ‘The Big Society’. The devolution of power is linked to a clear desire that all government organisations should, wherever possible, be democratically accountable. These changes will impact directly on the ways in which we plan, design and manage our cities, towns and urban and rural communities. A new political and organisational landscape is set to emerge at neighbourhood level and local service provision is likely to change as a result. In addition, the impacts of NHS, education and policing reform and the creation of new institutions such as Local Economic Partnerships (LEPs) are still to be gauged. A common feature, however, is that new budget-holding organisations will be commissioning capital expenditure and, in many cases, these new clients will lack experience in the procurement of good design. In addition, one thing is certain: citizen empowerment and personal responsibility will be central drivers in this new landscape. This is uncharted territory.

4.7

Planning reform is now well advanced. Planning is to be devolved down to neighbourhoods and a range of measures are being consulted on to simplify and speed up the development process. The draft new National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) is already showing a clear intent towards simpler and more accessible government guidance. Other proposals within the localism agenda, such as community rights to buy assets and to lead neighbourhood renewal, will require adaptation of existing practices and innovation from the industry as a whole.

4.8

Tied to these changes is the National Growth Agenda. Economic recovery and the reduction of the public deficit are intrinsically linked. Urban planning will need to integrate social, economic and environmental agendas and embrace smart technologies to build neighbourhoods robust enough to cope with the challenges of a very uncertain future. There will inevitably be pressure to question the costs of achieving good design and the processes and time frames to achieve it. It is not within the scope of this report to provide the reasons why good design is important. This has been extensively covered in a growing body of academic work and practical case studies. That said, the case does need to be constantly restated. The recommendations made in this report, particularly in section 6 with regard to new development, therefore, are mindful of the need not to burden the industry unnecessarily with expensive or time-consuming new processes.

4.9

Public service reforms, ranging from changes in education and healthcare to the ways in which local authorities deliver services, will create new configurations of local service providers. Initiatives of the previous government’s, such as Total Place, demonstrated an appetite among local authorities to work with other delivery agencies such as primary care trusts and local education authorities, simplifying commissioning and taking a long-term view of investment in a particular area. Now there is an opportunity, using a place-based approach, to tap into the energies of local neighbourhoods and rethink the way in which we invest in both service and built infrastructure.

4.10

The Design Council has a long history of promoting product and service innovation in order to support industry and improve national economic performance. This is an area in which the merger between CABA and the Design Council presents clear opportunities. In short it is an opportunity to reset the agenda and define what is meant by good design in the new economic and political context. This will involve widening the scope beyond architecture and urban design to embrace the reshaping of people's everyday lives.

4.11

While CABA focused its efforts on public sector clients, there are also opportunities offered by working more closely with the private-sector development industry. CABA's work with major supermarkets and stakeholder consultations with the British Property Federation and the Home Builders Federation have indicated that there is an appetite within the development industry to harness the power of good design for better delivery of outcomes and returns on investment.

4.12

Can the impact of new design in the built environment be quantified? Despite the growing body of evidence referred to above, this is still a relatively unexplored field. Case studies, while useful for learning from good practice, do not, collectively, amount to a clear proven case. Given the nature of the field of enquiry, it is often difficult to prove conclusively that particular urban or architectural forms are more successful than others. That said, the paucity of long-term research in this area is striking, especially compared to the immense effort devoted in recent years to monitoring the effects of government investment in for example, regeneration, health and social programmes. The impacts of different types of investment on crime, health, property values and longer-term running costs and values needs to be better researched over prolonged periods. While accepting the difficulties in constructing sound methodologies to do this, such information would be immensely useful to the industry as a whole. To illustrate this point it is interesting to consider, for example, how various responses to town centre regeneration following the 2011 August riots might be assessed over a longer period.

4.13

On longer-term research there is an opportunity to engage specifically with the Higher Education Funding Council of England (HEFCE) over potential funding. A new panel (HEFCE REF C16) has been set up to consider architecture, built environment and planning research requirements. This represents an opportunity for a dialogue involving the professional institutes and the industry as a whole.

“There is a constant presumption that good design means more money. The work that CABA did on looking at the value of good design and the costs of good design has been extremely beneficial. This message should continue to be highlighted in emerging guidance.”

— Kirsty Stokes

4.14

In a period of economic austerity it is right that all costs incurred by the public purse or associated with private development are rigorously justified. There are instances where the design approach can add considerable costs to a project. There is always scope for prestige or signature buildings either where the client is willing to pay or where there is a desire to represent civic ambition. (Indeed there are many examples such as Millennium Park in Chicago or the Guggenheim in Bilbao where the investment in extraordinary design has yielded quantifiable economic returns to the city). But good, well executed design does not necessarily cost extra money. Design quality in the built environment is complex and the debate needs to move beyond narrow definitions of style and appearance to embrace wider criteria. In asking the wider questions about how architectural, landscape and urban design can stimulate local economic performance, respond to the challenge of climate change and produce buildings and places appropriate to changing demographic profiles and social needs, the debate can move from what is currently considered to be today's best practice into tomorrow's 'next practice'. This, of course, will position the UK industry to exploit the challenges of increasingly competitive global markets.

4.15

Nationally, this will be an important agenda to explore. Tough economic circumstances tend to produce more realistic and robust solutions to urban problems and can foster innovation. Innovation in construction techniques, technology, product design and building procurement need not be at the expense of overall design quality, but this will only be the case when good design is a core value shared by architects, developers, government, clients and communities. This is a shared agenda that needs to be systematically built and co-ordinated over a long period. All these arguments lead back to the role of government. Central government leadership is paramount in setting the design agenda and the expectations around the built environment. The government needs to lead by example, fostering an interest in new practice and, as a very important client in its own right, set high standards when procuring capital works. In this respect, there should be a general presumption that public sector projects, whether directly promoted or enabled through government funding (including housing) should all achieve good design standards. Secondly, the government should use its influence to drive the wider design agenda and seek new solutions in some of the key areas that effect individuals' lives.

4.16

The proposed changes to the planning system already recognise the importance of design within it. David Willetts has recognised the Design Council as the government's Advisor on Design. With the transition of CABE from NDPB to charity status, its position as government advisor on the built environment is now ambiguous. Continued DCLG funding to maintain some of CABE's services does put Design Council Cabe in a particular and privileged position, but this position would benefit from formal clarification. Given the critical stage in developing a new infrastructure of government at local level and the importance placed, up to Prime-Ministerial level, on design, there is a strong case for government to have a principal independent organisation to which it can turn for design advice. This is not just DCLG, but also other major government departments. Given its track record over the past ten years and its position in the Design Council, there is a strong case to be made that this should be Design Council Cabe. Although there are other organisations that could provide advice, none have Design Council Cabe's stature or independence.

4.17

If Design Council Cabe is to play this key role, it cannot do so without the broad support of the industry as a whole. As a small and independent organisation it will need to demonstrate that it can act as a mouthpiece for the industry and mediate between disparate interests within it. In other words Design Council Cabe's relationship to the government would need to be consensual in respect of relevant institutions. The issue of how this is structured and funded would be a matter for negotiations between Design Council Cabe and industry.

Recommendations

- i. The government should recognise Design Council Cabe as a key advisor on Design in the Built Environment.
- ii. Design Council Cabe should provide strategic advice to government at all levels on design procurement in the built environment. In order to ensure that public money is spent on good quality, sustainable projects, Cabinet Office should encourage the use of Design Review and other design support services from Design Council Cabe.
- iii. Design Council Cabe should enter into a dialogue with HEFCE and the development, construction industry and government to identify long-term research requirements into the value of good design. Research Councils should be involved in any longer-term research.

05. Supporting the industry and developing future practice

5.1

In an increasingly competitive global market, towns and cities will need to resolve compounded problems around housing, transportation, demographics, social equality and climate change. Responding to social, economic and technological changes will require innovation from the industry. Best practice is important, but understanding 'next practice' is now paramount. New cost-effective solutions need to be fostered for the commission, design and construction of buildings and places and for making them economically and environmentally sustainable and great environments in which to live and work.

5.2

From 1999 to 2011 CABA grew to support the public-sector-led investment in the built environment. Now, with less public sector investment, uncertain private sector financing and new actors in the built environment, namely a growing coalition of citizens who want to see change at a local level, Design Council Caba should evolve from a design agency into an advocate, facilitator and knowledge hub. One of the key tasks will be to capitalise on CABA's good work and develop a strong new identity that is appropriate for the new context.

5.3

The built environment industry is, of course, considerably broader than the architectural profession. It includes planning, surveying, engineering, construction, development and product design and includes government at all levels as well as civic, community and amenity groups. There is an imperative for these sectors to work together, to harness new technologies, open information systems and develop a new shared narrative that illustrates the centrality of design to everyday life.

“Well-designed development is dependent on the strength of the design professionals to deliver a viable investment and quality and convince their client of the merits of design quality. It also depends on the power and skills of the planning authorities providing policy and consent.”

**— *Martina Juvara,*
Head of Urban Design,
SKM Colin Buchanan**

5.4

Design Council Caba through its grasp of best practice and in its relationship with government is well placed to feed its knowledge into a new focus on 'next practice'. Over the past twelve years, CABA has acted as a national champion for high standards of design in the built environment. Given the pace of the changes affecting urban areas, it is essential that there remains a point of focus for these important national issues. Design Council Caba can act as an important conduit between the government and the industry in this context.

5.5

Having accepted that a good design process is critical to achieving the sustainable development which government desires, a framework or system is required to ensure that innovation and best practice are captured and disseminated. Whereas CABA was funded directly by government, the new Design Council Caba, being a charity, will need to find ways of partnering with other organisations to finance this system in different ways. The experience of conducting this review has led me to believe that there is a willingness across the industry to co-operate in promoting its shared interests in raising design standards. It is for Design Council Caba to determine, operationally, how best to go about this.

5.6

There is, however, scope for the built environment industry and, in particular, the professions to work more closely together. This need has already been highlighted in the government's Construction Strategy. The Bishop Review Advisory Group (appendix 1) has provided a neutral forum for those involved in achieving a high quality built environment to discuss how best to meet their shared aims and objectives. This is in itself a tangible outcome of the review and there is a strong case for the group, possibly with a revised composition, to be retained. This would act as a forum for policy debate and a place where the energies of the different bodies can be aligned. An example of this might be in the joint commissioning of research on emerging practices and subsequent dissemination of it to the industry as a whole.

5.7

New clients such as local community groups will require support to enable them to make a positive impact on their environments and take full advantage of the new powers being given to them. The recommendations outlined in section 7 will go some way in supporting communities to take a more active role in place-making. But where community groups have decided to go further in developing specific projects, through community right to build or in taking over formerly public assets, there will be a need for tailored one-on-one support to ensure that they have the necessary client skills to achieve their aspirations. The RIBA's Client Design Advisor programme, Planning Aid, CABE enabling panel and RICS/RTPI networks of planning experts could all play an important role in supporting these new clients. Although a range of skills is required to ensure that communities are supported, there is scope for combining some of these panels and providing a more unified system of support that can be more easily navigated by neighbourhood groups.

5.8

The devolution of power away from government departments will promote locally based organisations. NHS, education and policing reforms will create a new set of clients. Many of these will have limited experience in the field and little knowledge of good design and how to procure it. The procurement of design services by the public sector, especially in one-off local exercises, raises cause for concern. In the past ten years, procurement has passed from professional to administrative departments. Increasingly, those commissioning the services do not have the expertise to select good designers. The absence of a good client and a good design team at the outset adds complexity and time to the planning process and brings the risk of delays and cost overruns. In this respect the Design Council Cabi can offer support on the client side to

- Assist with brief setting – helping others get the basic questions right, defining the vision and the project narrative
- Mentor, coach and peer review
- Evaluate – jointly commissioning research to track post-occupancy experience and costs
- Celebrate successes, host awards and build learning networks.

5.9

Notwithstanding the benefits of building support networks to assist organisations procuring design services, there are wider issues regarding the effectiveness of procurement, especially within the broader public sector. This again is beyond the scope (and time available) for this review but the issues are important and do need to be addressed. The experience of procuring design services is generally poor. It is expensive, bureaucratic and time-consuming, is generally driven by process rather than outcome and is too rarely placed under the control of operational staff who have a real stake in the final product. From the practitioner's point of view, procurement of design services is a costly overhead which detracts from provision of an effective end result. In short the present system is costly, slow and often delivers a product that is second best. This is an area for urgent dialogue between Design Council Cabi and government that should lead to further in-depth review.

5.10

Housebuilders, represented largely by the Home Builders Federation, the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA) and Registered Social Landlords (RSLs) all work together to deliver much needed housing. The HCA will continue to be a key funder and RSLs the key providers of affordable housing. If we are to avoid the disasters of some affordable housing from the 1960s and 1970s, it is important that all new housing built through some form of public subsidy meets (at least) minimum design standards. In this respect, the client and commissioning role of the HCA needs to be strengthened. There is a national agenda here to rethink housing standards and consider whether simple toolkits such as Building for Life can be developed further in order to drive up standards. International best practice should be examined in order to raise our own standards and the Design Review mechanism should be employed as a matter of best practice in order to maintain standards. There is real scope here for co-operation between the HCA and Design Council Cabi to set frameworks and procedures to ensure that the next generation of public investment in housing is successful.

5.11

Building for Life (BfL) is arguably one of the most successful of CABA's products, with significant support from the planning, development and housebuilder communities. What is clear from the stakeholder consultation exercise is that where BfL is most effective as a voluntary mechanism to improve scheme quality within a planning negotiation. In the new, deregulatory context, it is best for BfL to move away from the standards-based approach and back to being a starting point for negotiations. To this end, it would be prudent to review the operation of BfL with its partners and the industry. However, it is critical that in this move Design Council Cabi and its partners maintain the goodwill of the planning authorities and housebuilders by keeping BfL relevant to the new planning and development context.

5.12

BfL has been a qualified success as a toolkit that can be applied (and measured) by the industry. Toolkits are useful, but cannot substitute for the design process. That said, there is scope for Design Council Cabi to continue the dialogue by developing new toolkits that could set benchmarks for design quality and that can then be incorporated into the design process.

Recommendations

- i.
Design Council Cabe should become a centre of excellence providing demonstrations and leadership on innovation in the built environment. It should jointly commission/pool research ensuring that the value and impact of good design, from scheme to city level, is better understood and appreciated.
- ii.
That Design Council Cabe retains the pan-industry advisory group as a forum for debate and discussion on the emerging policy issues and new approaches to design in the built environment.
- iii.
That DCLG and BIS engage with Design Council Cabe to consider key topic areas for further research in the areas of housing, environment, climate change, public space and the impacts of demographic change.
- iv.
That Design Council Cabe re-focuses its work to explore areas of emerging 'next practice' and disseminate the lessons to the industry.
- v.
That the Design Council Cabe and government take up the issues surrounding the difficulties of public sector procurement and consider ways in which improved outcomes relating to design can be achieved.
- vi.
That Design Council Cabe enters into a dialogue with the HCA to articulate key design issues on housing, assist in developing policy on design standards and construct client support and Design Review systems for the social housing sector.
- vii.
That discussions take place between Design Council Cabe, the RIBA and RTPI with an objective to co-ordinate their design support services into a system that is easy for neighbourhood groups to understand and navigate.

06. Achieving design quality through the planning system

6.1

It is often assumed that good architecture and urban design are solely a matter of personal taste. This is not the case. Good design flows from a coherent process that starts from an effective brief, understands and resolves the tensions between functionality, context and value for money and is executed with attention to detail and finish. Good design has integrity of both purpose and execution.

6.2

Although there are clear parallels between product design and design in the built environment, there are significant differences when dealing with buildings and spaces. The first is that buildings need to respond to their context. In other words, however well designed a building might be, if it fails to respond to its surroundings, the outcome is likely to be flawed. The second difference is the wider range of stakeholders. Buildings and spaces have a public presence, so poorly designed buildings are not purely a matter of the client's personal choice. They are experienced by many and collectively contribute to the wider quality of life of our towns and cities and to our legacy to future generations.

6.3

Failures to achieve good design are clearly recognisable. Badly-designed places impose costs on their occupiers, their neighbours and society. Such costs are still sadly apparent in the congestion of our cities, miserable social housing and drab public spaces. One cost is the blight on lives. Scarce future resources will be required to resolve problems caused by poor procurement, planning or short-term cost-cutting.

“There is still concern that refusing applications solely on good design will not necessarily stand up at appeal.”

— Local Authority Planning Officer

6.4

In August 2011 DCLG published its consultation draft of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). The principles of sustainable development are firmly embedded in this document and planning is clearly couched within its economic, social and environmental roles. It is encouraging that the important role that planning has to play in ensuring good design is articulated throughout the report, but in particular in the introduction, where it states: ‘Development will be expected to be of good design and appropriately located.’ The NPPF elegantly condenses and clarifies the planning system into a single and accessible document. Under the specific section on design it states:

“The government attaches great importance to the design of the built environment. Good design is indivisible from good planning and should contribute positively to making places better for people. The government’s objective for the planning system is to promote good design that ensures attractive, usable and durable places. This is a key element in achieving sustainable development.”

— *Draft National Planning Statement, August 2011*

6.5

It goes on to state that Local Planning Authorities should plan positively for the achievement of high quality and inclusive design in all development, including individual buildings and public and private spaces. It also stresses the importance of good landscaping. Although LPAs should avoid unnecessary prescription and should not attempt to impose architectural styles, they should be prepared to ‘...refuse development of obviously poor design that fails to take the opportunities available for improving the character and quality of an area.’ As a positive counterpoint to this argument it goes on to state ‘...where design of a particular high quality is proposed, including innovative design, local authorities should encourage its development unless there is a compelling reason not to do so.’

6.6

Changes to the planning system formed a key part of the discussions and stakeholder engagement during the period of this review. The consolidation of planning policy into a shorter document was welcomed, as was the inclusion of clear statements supporting design quality. There was a desire from some respondents to this review for more guidance on what constitutes good design and for mechanisms at national and local level that would determine good design and support local planning authorities with arguments to reject poorly-designed schemes. The importance of inclusive design was also stressed within the assessment of design quality, alongside other issues such as energy, transport and green infrastructure.

6.7

If high quality design in the built environment is to be achieved then a degree of objectivity will be required in order to assess and evaluate it. Established techniques such as Design Review and assistance to clients when commissioning projects and to local neighbourhoods in promoting change will be important. Similarly, the availability of best practice and the sharing of experience will all be essential if the ambitions of the NPPF are to be realised. The NPPF also contains a presumption in favour of sustainable development. Clear definitions as to what constitutes sustainable development will be very difficult to set out in detail. Design Review is an existing methodology that could be extended to assess the particular sustainable merits of individual schemes.

6.8

In the twelve months up to March 2011 there were 439,900 planning applications determined by local planning authorities (at district level). Over 75 percent of these were approved. While not all of these will have resulted in physical developments, collectively these schemes, regulated through the planning system, have a significant impact on the quality of the places in which people will live and work. Over a 20-year period, approximately 25 percent of the physical fabric of an area will be subject to some sort of physical change. In many urban areas, this figure may be considerably higher.

6.9

During the consultation on this report it was clear that some large towns and cities have got the message about the importance of good design and are managing to maintain varying degrees of design capability. Elsewhere many places – suburban areas, market towns and rural districts – are struggling to deliver good design through development control or local plan-making and lack any spare resources to support their local businesses or residents. This is alarming especially in the current economic climate in which we are likely to see smaller, piecemeal development across the country. If localism achieves its desired effect of unlocking new development opportunities within or on the edges of existing settlements, the cumulative impact will literally change the face of the country. Given the new presumption in favour of sustainable development, it is of even greater importance that each scheme is in keeping with a well developed Local Plan that is flexible and responds to changing market conditions.

6.10

The control of development and plan-making (or approval) powers will continue to be the responsibility of local authorities. Critically, political accountability for place-making sits with the local planning authority through the planning committee. Any system therefore that seeks to encourage and ensure good design in the built environment will require a well resourced, capable and design-literate planning authority at both officer and elected member levels.

6.11

Despite the best efforts of the RTPi there is still a shortage of high quality and well motivated planning staff at local level. The shortage of professional staff reflects a trend of 25 years or more in which planning departments have been squeezed of resources and planning as a profession has been consistently and often unfairly criticised. Across the country, even where resources are available, it has proved difficult to attract good professional staff, especially with design skills, to work in the public sector. The present pressures on local authority budgets are only likely to exacerbate this problem. Although by no means universal, professional capacity and design expertise specifically in local planning authorities was a general issue that arose across England during the consultation for this review. The lack of planning capacity in general and design expertise in particular can result in considerable frustration for developers, cause delays in the process and add additional costs. This issue has been repeatedly raised by the development industry and the RTPi.

6.12

While there are resource problems at local level, this situation is not universal or intractable. Many metropolitan areas and central London boroughs still retain capable planning departments with design expertise under senior professional management. In addition, there are a number of examples of good practice aimed at promoting design quality. In Leeds, for example, the post of civic architect (supported by a very small and strategic team) was created in the early 1990s, with the remit of understanding and shaping the city. The mapping of the city's characteristics has allowed the production of contextual strategies and simple and powerful visions for the city. The team also worked out practical steps for urban improvement. This knowledge and thinking has been focused into discussions at pre-application stages. Major developers active in Leeds testify that this approach, separate from the formal process of development control, adds speed and certainty to the planning process. There is also consensus that the advice has had a significant impact on both design quality and long-term value.

6.13

This raises the question of how to strengthen design expertise at the local level. Leadership is important at both the political and professional levels. Consideration urgently needs to be given to how effective and continuous design training can be provided to planners, including those at planning schools and those already in practice. In-house design expertise at senior professional level in all planning authorities should be seen as an essential requirement. There is also a need to re-appraise the training of senior local politicians and decision-makers, especially in the light of the move towards more city mayors in England and the devolution of decision-making, budgets and procurement to more local levels. These issues are not new. If they are to be resolved, two things need to happen: the RTPi needs to be supported to place design capability firmly at the heart of the planning profession and a national training programme that includes decision-makers and politicians should be established.

6.14

As has been discussed above, good design outcomes require in-house expertise to carry out pre-application negotiations with developers and make informed decisions. However, more complex or prominent developments, particularly large-scale or technically challenging projects, do benefit from external independent and cross-professional advice. There is no shortage of well intentioned advice available to local planning officers and committee members – for example, from local design panels, conservation advisory committees, amenity societies and statutory advisory bodies such as English Heritage. However, if high quality design is to be achieved, a degree of objectivity is required to assess and evaluate proposals based on their individual merits rather than any particular point of view or political agenda.

“We are at a difficult time and need to adjust, probably permanently, to different and cheaper modes of working than those we have been used to at least in the public or publicly-funded sectors. At the same time we are seeing a loss of professionals such as conservation officers and urban designers, from the public sector at least, who often act as conduits for bringing schemes to design review. The approach to design review in future needs to be more nimble, flexible and less based on formal panel review.”

— Michael Taylor

6.15

Design Review is essentially about making a scheme better than it otherwise would have been. It can challenge, advise and recommend, but it cannot, of itself, make a bad scheme good. When carried out at the right stage (or stages) it can allow all parties to reflect on a scheme and broaden the debate as to how other factors, such as the scheme's wider context, environmental or accessibility issues might best be considered.

When imposed on the process at too late a stage, or without the consent of the main participants (the local planning authority or developer – including neighbourhood development partnerships), it can lead to conflict. But when applied correctly it can improve a project and speed up the planning process. In addition, it has the effect of raising the bar on design quality generally. Although difficult to verify objectively, the existence of a national system of Design Review results in better designs coming forward. This is a cumulative process that will continue to bear fruit in years to come.

“Design Review makes a meaningful contribution to the quality of a scheme, provides confidence to both developers and planners, and saves time and money.”

**— Alan Leibowitz
Dorrington**

6.16

Within the NPPF, where design quality is being actively recommended, Design Review offers a simple, robust and tested methodology to gauge design quality. Throughout the consultation for this report, there was wide support for Design Review as an activity and for Design Council Cabi's continuing role in administering it. This is backed up by CABI's own survey of local planning authorities (LPAs) which showed a 95 percent satisfaction rating with Design Review. The growing number of local authorities that have set up their own panels underscores this point. Consultation feedback largely centred on ways in which Design Review could be improved as an iterative process that considered schemes, where possible, at the pre-application stage. There were also a number of comments concerning the relationship between the national, affiliated (regional) and local panels that suggest scope for streamlining the process. The question of charging for Design Review was widely debated, with the predominant view being that costs should be born by the development industry and therefore embedded in a revised planning fee system.

6.17

The importance of design is clearly articulated in the NPPF, and in particular there is recognition that good and innovative design should be encouraged. In order to be effective, consideration of design quality, must carry material weight both in the new national planning framework and in DCLG advice to chief planning officers. This is a view supported by many of the respondents to this review. Design Review is a tried and tested methodology to assess and improve design quality and it is recommended that it is advocated as an element of best practice to be followed when determining any significant scheme.

Design Review

Design Review is a model for assessing design quality via a peer-review panel in keeping with the Principals and Practice guidance agreed by Design Council Cabi, RIBA, RTPI, and Landscape Institute.

The present Design Review system comprises:

- i. A national panel, based in London, which considers major projects.
- ii. Regional or affiliated panels. There is a network of eight panels covering England that consider other schemes referred to them by developers or LPAs. These are part-funded by CABI. This funding is secure for 2011/2012 and 2012/2013 only. The affiliated panels are constituted under CABI best practice guidelines. London is the only region not to have a regional panel and London cases are considered by the CABI national panel. They make up 42 percent of the national panel's agenda.
- iii. Specialist panels run by CABI for example for the London Olympics, Crossrail etc.

In addition to this, over fifty local authorities have set up their own local panels. Many follow the CABI best practice guidelines, but practice varies from panel to panel. Local panels are not funded or accredited by CABI.

6.18

Although most parties generally support the continuation of Design Review there are some significant points for consideration:

- Design Review is only a part of the planning process. The competence and capacity of the local planning authority is absolutely critical.
- A local design panel is not a substitute for a properly resourced and skilled planning department. Local design panels, although generally felt to be a good thing, are of variable quality.
- Pre-planning input was seen as being the most effective way of successfully shaping a scheme. Most developers and LPAs supported a series of Design Reviews specifically programmed within the process, rather than a single review. The development industry would generally prefer reviews integrated throughout the process, with the panel having the time to visit the site and understand the scheme's context (and financial constraints).
- Quicker and less formal feedback would be welcomed by all sides. Some developers expressed concern that CABI advice had become too formal and opaque.
- Continuity of advice between panels – either local, regional or national and over the time period of the development of a scheme – was seen as an imperative. There was justifiable criticism where participants presented the same scheme to panels the composition of which had changed.

6.19

There are a range of other issues concerning the present system. The first concerns coverage. To be effective there should be full national coverage. Duplication, whereby reviews are carried out at the local and then the regional or national level, should be avoided. This raises the question of local panels. The general consensus is that good local panels add value to the process. It is thought that the establishment of local panels should be a matter for local authorities (or groups of authorities). There does, however, remain the issue of quality and consistency. If the advice of local panels is to carry weight in the planning process, they should meet a basic quality standard. This could be achieved through a simple form of franchise under Design Council Cabi or an affiliated regional panel, acknowledging that they have been set up and constituted in accordance with agreed best practice, are transparent and offer consistent design advice. I would advocate that where these standard requirements have been met, the advice of these panels should be presented as part of the information when making planning decisions and should carry appropriate weight. The funding of these local panels is a matter to be determined by the LPA in question. At present, most are funded from pre-application fees.

6.20

It is questionable whether a national panel and eight regional panels are all required. There can be little justification for a scheme in Liverpool or Newcastle to be referred to London. In order to simplify the present system I propose that the Design Council Cabi National Panel only considers projects of specific national importance. These might be major infrastructure projects, sites of international importance e.g. UNESCO sites etc. In addition, the national panel should select themes or topics where emerging practice can be examined and lessons for the industry as a whole can be collected and disseminated (see section 5). All other schemes should be covered by the regional panels regardless of size. In addition boundaries (based on the now outmoded English regions) could be simplified and the number of panels could be reduced. This would allow any available funding to support a streamlined and sustainable model. Under the regional model, London would need to have its own panel. There is a strong rationale, however, for London and the South East to share a panel as, geographically, this can be considered a 'natural' region – with economies that are intrinsically linked e.g. Stratford with Ebbsfleet, Medway with Croydon, Gatwick with Brighton. In any case, the current South East and East of England panel boundaries make little sense.

6.21

A common theme from consultation with developers concerned how review could be more user-friendly and how panels could give faster, clearer and less formal advice and allocate more time to understanding the constraints facing a scheme. An option could be for developers to pay a CABI enabler to act as an independent conduit into the Design Review. They could be pre-briefed on the project, give informal pre-review advice and have an opportunity to respond to the panel's recommendations. In any event, informal feedback should be given to developers within a few days of the panel meeting, prior to the formal written letter. In addition, an interpretative meeting could be offered to distil the panel's real concerns.

**In some
authorities there
isn't a culture
or the policy of
valuing good
design and there
is no consistency
in what happens
in their area.**

— *Juliet Bidgood*
Architect/Urban Designer

6.22

The government could further signal its commitment to good design by ensuring that all physical development projects that it procures or funds (including housing funded by the HCA) have robust and appropriately skilled client structures in place and are subject to Design Review at appropriate stages of their inceptions and development. This should be incorporated into government construction strategy.

6.23

The final set of questions concerns who should pay for Design Review. While Design Review costs are extremely small in relation to total development costs, the issue is emotive, especially at present. Prior to April 2011 the national Design Review and most regional Design Reviews were free and effectively covered by CABE through its DCLG core funding. This is still the case in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland. If the present funding arrangement between Design Council Caba and DCLG ends in March 2013 and is not renewed, Design Review will have to be funded in the long term by the industry itself, whether through voluntary donations, statutory planning fees or voluntary fees.

6.24

Experience from the affiliated regional panels does not support an argument for Design Review to be voluntary and funded by the developer outside any planning fee structure. Even the introduction of modest Design Review fees of £500-£750 has resulted in a substantial reduction in the number of schemes coming to panels. A voluntary Design Review system would probably allow some poorer developments to avoid any form of assessment.

6.25

If Design Review is a part of the planning regulatory process. It is there to essentially protect the public good and therefore the appropriate place for its funding is from planning fees. There are only two options for this: Pre-application fees, or planning fees themselves. The liberalisation of planning fees and the new Community Infrastructure Levy regulations offer an opportunity for each local authority to make a decision about how best to fund Design Review and at what level they require design support. Pre-application fees are the best option for funding local, regional and national Design Review this is the time when both developers and local authorities find Design Review advice most helpful and the fee framework offers greater flexibility. However because of the voluntary nature of pre-application fees there is a danger that schemes that would most benefit from Design Review advice would not necessarily be subject to it. To overcome this, the importance attached to Design Review by DCLG should continue to reinforce by the chief planner's letter. In short there should be a presumption in favour of Design Review for all significant development projects.

Recommendations

- i. Government should explicitly recognise and reinforce the value of good design in achieving their ambitions for prosperous, sustainable and decent places within the new planning system. This should be done by amending the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) to include a Design Review process as the mechanism by which environmental, social and economic issues are reconciled within the definition of sustainable development. This would ensure that the presumption in favour of sustainable development delivers good quality schemes that are accepted by the public and ensure Local Plans deliver good quality place-making.
- ii. That DCLG reinforce the importance of Design Review and confer upon it appropriate material weight within planning-decision-making and planning appeals.
- iii. That DCLG, The RPTI and the LGA commission an independent review of design capacity in local planning authorities. This should include an assessment of the appropriate role and levels of seniority of staff with design qualifications engaged in the development process and the design training requirements for councillors.
- iv. That Design Review is retained as a best-practice part of the development process and that the CABE model is retained under the co-ordination of Design Council Caba:
 - That Design Council Caba maintains a national panel that looks at schemes of national importance, major infrastructure and carries out a programme of themed topic reviews that are used to develop industry best/next practice.
 - That a London panel is set up and the boundaries of the current affiliated regional panels including London and the South East area are reviewed.
 - That all other projects, regardless of size, are considered by the appropriate regional panel.
 - That a simple mechanism of best-practice accreditation is applied by Design Council Caba to local panels and, subject to this, their views are accorded appropriate weight.
- v. That DCLG support the funding of Design Review through the charging of planning or pre-application fees.

07. Delivering better neighbourhoods

7.1

We should not overlook the relation that good design creates between people and place. This was shown by research undertaken on behalf of CABE and the AHRC by Ipsos MORI on public attitudes to beauty:

“Beauty in the built environment was seen as being important for civic pride and for attracting people to an area. They (people) believe that beauty is important in their local area and there is a strong consensus for striving for more beauty in neighbourhoods, towns and cities. Beauty in place is recognised as not evenly distributed. Where there is less, it is seen as part of deprivation; people can and do pay more to live in areas which are beautiful. Beauty in place is also seen as part of a cycle of respect, it can make people respect and area more and by being respected, an area can retain its beauty.”

7.2

The localism agenda has set up a new dynamic, a shift from a system that was dominated by professionals and professional advice to one that puts people at its centre. The devolution of power to the lowest appropriate level is a central objective of government policy. Localism springs from a desire to empower local neighbourhoods to create the homes, public spaces and infrastructure that they need, while at the same time triggering local investment and economic growth.

7.3

As with the control of development, a pivotal role in place-making has to rest with local authorities. Local authorities are democratically accountable to their electorate and can act as the bridge between the different public and private agencies and form alliances for local development and regeneration. This does not mean that local authorities should usurp the localism agenda, but they can be one of its key facilitators.

7.4

Localism will devolve real powers around place-making to neighbourhood level. As a result communities will need to be supported to understand what good design looks like in urban and rural contexts. People sometimes have low aspirations for their areas, but simple projects with the right support can help to raise ambitions and empower people to demand more from developers and local authorities. As neighbourhoods become more empowered it is important that they have the knowledge and skills at their disposal to make informed choices.

7.5

Local plan-making will become very influential in shaping the places in which people live and work. Local Planning Authorities (LPAs) are charged with developing a Local Plan that will take a long-term view of development across an area. But much of the real drive and decision-making will take place within the communities themselves. The next generation of local plans will set the context for development over the next 10–15 years. A well understood and articulated design process as part of plan-making can assist in reconciling sustainability and economic growth.

7.6

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), with its significant emphasis on the importance of achieving good design, will require planners to take a more proactive role in helping to shape the physical appearance of their areas. Design cannot be divorced from land use planning, density, massing, housing quality or environmental performance. If design is to carry sufficient weight, effective design expertise needs to be available at a senior level, where officers are in a position to advise elected councillors in balancing complex decisions. Put simply, local planning authorities that do not have this expertise are likely to authorise mediocre schemes and fail to enhance the local environment, to the long-term detriment of their areas.

7.7

The question of capacity and capability at local planning authority level has already been covered. The same resource problems apply to their proactive local planning teams. This capability is likely to be further eroded as financial pressures inevitably direct limited resources into statutory obligations such as development control. While acknowledging the pressures on LPAs, getting planners engaged in place-making with their local communities and in formulating rather than controlling development, is more likely to energise a profession that, for too long, has been consigned to a regulatory role and then (often unjustifiably) criticised for being reactive rather than proactive.

7.8

Proactive planning at its best is about working in partnership. It can fashion a long-term vision for all areas. It can make something good happen, make a scheme better, or assist in getting it implemented. When done well, it leaves behind confidence and capability that can generate further good in the future.

7.9

Definitions here are important. It is useful to distinguish enabling from design support for development. In relation to the latter most developers have the capability and resources. Enabling support to local authorities or neighbourhoods, however, fills a capacity and/or skills gap. Arguably, at a time of resource cuts at local authority level and a strong drive for devolution and the empowerment of neighbourhoods, a flexible and effective enabling resource is more important than ever. It should be recognised from the outset, however, that enabling is a client role. It has to be about defining the local issues, building consensus, producing briefs and helping with client management of whatever action arises. It is not about carrying out the project. That is a consultancy role that should be commissioned separately. Implicitly, enabling should be applied and managed at local level.

7.10

Direct support is already provided to community groups through Architecture Centres, the Glasshouse and other organisations. This support is dependent on external funding sources and many of the delivery bodies are in a precarious financial position due to reductions in public expenditure. Support is also given through the RIBA design advisors network, Design Council Cabe and Planning Aid.

7.11

In its new, highly focused role, Design Council Cabe is no longer positioned to directly deliver or support projects on the ground. What it can do is complement the work of others and be a centre for the collection and dissemination of best practice. What is now required is a combination of DIY tools, direct support and awareness-raising. There is also scope for improving co-ordination between the various bodies and agencies providing design support at local level. From the perspective of a first-time local project procurer, the array of support services must be confusing. There is a clear opportunity here for the various professional institutes to provide integrated or complementary registers of 'accredited' advisors.

7.12

In early 2011 the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors set up the Land and Society Commission (chaired by Trevor Beattie), the property industry's first attempt to engage systematically with the localism agenda and understand its role in creating sustainable communities. In line with the findings from the Land and Society Commission, it would be useful to explore a further partnership between the professional institutions that would encourage its members to provide structured pro-bono or below-market-rate advice for the public interest. This might be in relation to specific community schemes or for local authority areas. A similar model already exists in the USA and is being developed as a potential model in the UK by the Architecture Foundation. Under this proposal, architects and other professional firms would be encouraged to donate one percent of their professional time to support local community-based initiatives. Unlike conventional corporate volunteering, this would be a professional time input integrated fully into the practice's workload.

7.13

Universities, particularly those that offer built environment degrees such as architecture, planning, landscape architecture and surveying, are an underused resource in this country. As distinct from many other parts of Europe, the relationship between local councils and universities tends to be weak and underdeveloped. Where partnerships have been developed, the local benefits and increased capacity are evident. Examples of this are the Academy of Urbanism's Unvers Cities programme, Bradford Academy, which offers training and support to planning officers and councillors, or the partnership involving Sheffield City Council, Sheffield University, Yorkshire Forward and Sheffield Hallam University. During the consultation process, a number of universities came forward with ideas and a desire to be more involved with research and the delivery of design support. The dissemination of this best practice and the building of new model partnerships is an important area for further exploration.

7.14

Notwithstanding the wide range of potential sources of expertise that could work with and assist local neighbourhoods, there is still the question of how this can be best co-ordinated and deployed. In order to support the effective implementation of the localism agenda the following is required:

- A simple but robust methodology to assist neighbourhood planning that illustrates how design quality can be embedded within the process. This might cover research, client skills, procurement, preparing briefs, charettes and Design Review
- A process for disseminating best practice
- A mechanism for directing public authorities or neighbourhoods to resources available in their local areas e.g. Architecture Centres, university departments, individuals volunteering via their professional bodies, practices donating time etc
- Specific resource assistance to local organisations or public bodies through initiatives such as design surgeries through, for example, local Architecture Centres or review panels
- Workshops for engaged community volunteers, introducing them to key design issues, encouraging them to develop their role as community place curators and contributing effectively to neighbourhood and local plans
- A cross-disciplinary approved list of accredited local design advisors and design enablers that local authorities and local organisations can call upon.

Recommendations

i.

That Design Council Cabe focuses its future role on being a centre of excellence for the debate, research and dissemination of experience and best practice on neighbourhood engagement with place-making.

ii.

That Design Council Cabe sets up a standing forum for information exchange between the various organisations involved in supporting neighbourhood planning.

iii.

That DCLG commission a review of the capacity of local planning authorities and third-sector organisations to support local neighbourhoods.

iv.

That the professional institutions jointly commission a review on how design support for local neighbourhoods can be effectively harnessed and streamlined.

Design Council Cabe should commission a series of pilot projects to assess ways in which resources can be focussed at a local level to support design initiatives.

vi.

That Design Council Cabe and the professional institutes seek funding support for a separate review to examine the role of universities in assisting local areas through research and direct project support.

08. Conclusions

8.1

The world has changed since CABA was established in 1999. Public service reform, localism and the imperative of economic growth will all place new challenges on how we design and adapt the built environment. The reform of the planning system is one of the responses to this new political landscape.

8.2

Despite these changes, local planning authorities still have a central role to play. This is where negotiations over the quality of new developments take place and plan-making is signed off. If we are to create functional, sustainable and attractive places for future generations, we need design expertise resourced and embedded at local level and this needs to be supported effectively.

8.3

The need for value-led innovation in architecture, landscape and urban design is now recognised across the industry. This need not compromise the intrinsic quality of a scheme. Good design often flourishes in difficult economic conditions, as plans and proposals have to be sophisticated and robust in order to be implemented. However, doing what we do well will no longer suffice. The design agenda is set to shift into areas where we will need to experiment, learn and disseminate new and emerging techniques and approaches.

8.4

So where does Design Council Caba fit in to all of this? There are four clear roles. First, it can assist and advise the government and fashion a national design agenda. Secondly, it can act as a debate forum for the industry. It can be the neutral ground where the industry in the widest sense helps government in developing new policy and 'next practice'. Thirdly, it can influence the overall quality of what is built by using Design Review and helping public bodies with procurement. Finally, it can assist others in pulling together effective methodologies and expertise to embed good design at the local level.

8.5

This review has sought to scope the ground and set out a broad framework within which design of the built environment may continue to be given the prominence it deserves. Many of the recommendations are deliberately broad and will be finessed through discussion and debate within the industry. It is this ongoing debate that is important. There are not necessarily single simple solutions. Workable and effective responses through policy and project design will emerge from this debate and be strengthened by consensus with the industry as a whole.

8.6

We are living through a period of great change. It is important that the quality of what we build is not sacrificed for short-term gain. In this respect there is still a role to play for a national body like Design Council Caba.

Appendix 01: The Advisory group

I would like to extend my thanks and gratitude towards the members of the advisory group, who have provided expert guidance and insight throughout the process.

Design Council Cabi

David Kester
Paul Finch
Rab Bennetts

RIBA

Ruth Reed
Anna Scott-Marshall

RTPI

Colin Haylock
Mike Hayes

Landscape Institute

Alastair McCapra
Peter Neal

RICS

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Mark Goodwin

Architecture Centre Network

Bridget Sawyers

British Property Federation

Liz Peace
Ghislaine Trehearn

Home Builder's Federation

John Slaughter
Andrew Whitaker

Prince's Foundation

Hank Dittmar
James Hulme

Homes and Communities Agency

Richard Hill

Former CABE Commissioners

Ben Page
MJ Long
Joyce Bridges
Nick Johnson
Richard Cass
Sarah Wigglesworth

Appendix 02: List of Consultees

I would like to thank the individuals and organisations who contributed to this review over the course of the last five months. While I have endeavoured to include all the names of people who contributed below, inevitably some will be missed. I appreciate everyone who took the time to attend one of the roundtables, sit down for a conversation with me, or send in a submission.

Adam Roake	Colin Pullan
Adrian Penfold	Craig O'Brien
Alan Byrne	Dan Clarke
Alan Leibowitz	Darren Price
Alan Wann	Darren Ratcliffe
Alex Stevenson	Dave Chetwyn
Alfred Munkenbeck	David Clouston
Alison Fisher	Councillor David Guest
Alistair Walker	David Henry
Allan Atlee	David Hosken
Allan Jones	David Jackson
Amanda Reynolds	David Mellor
Amanprit Johal	David Orr
Amy Burbidge	David Roberts
Andrew Day	David Rudlin
Andrew Pritchard	David Stuart
Andrew Pryke	David Tittle
Andrew Rieley	Dean Cracknell
Andy Bell	Dean Thody
Andy Gibbons	Deborah Fox
Andy Mace	Dominic Rowland
Andy Van Vliet	Elaine Paterson
Angela Godrich	Elizabeth Motley
Angela Sansome	Emma Adams
Anna Crampton	Emma Cariaga
Anne Arkle	Emma England
Anthony Clerici	Eric Davis
Anthony Ingram	Faye Tomlinson
Councillor Anthony Negus	Frances Moseley
Ashley Baldwin	Councillor Funda Willetts
Councillor Barbara Harrison	Gareth Price
Belinda Irlam-Mowbray	Gary Hall
Ben Castell	Gary Hunt
Ben van Bruggen	Gerard Maccreanor
Ben Wrighton	Gerard Ryan
Councillor Bob Pitts	Councillor Gerry Lewin
Bob Souster	Graeme Moore
Bob White	Graham Marshall
Carl Francis	Graham Saunders
Carol Botten	Graham Sword
Carol Larkin	Graham Paul PaulSmith
Caroline Kay	Guy Hanson
Charles Wilson	Harriett Hindmarsh
Charlotte Myhrum	Heather Hilburn
Chris Jones	Councillor Heidi Brunsdon
Chris Lamb	Heike Heinzelmann
Chris Oldershaw	Helen Forman
Chris Potts	Helen Gray
Christine Starmer	Helen Jeffries
Christopher Farrah	Helen Moir
Claire Griffiths	Hilary Satchwell
Clive Dutton	Hugh Daglish

Ian Deans	Kirsteen Thomson	Nicky Harrison	Richard Sewell
Ian Lindsay	Kirsty Stokes	Nicola Durrant	Richard Shaw
Ian Phillips	Laura Pollard	Nicola Mathers	Richard Simmons
Irena Bauman	Lauren Lucas	Nicole Crockett	Richard Walker
James Carpenter	Lee Mallett	Nigel Edmondson	Rob Allan
James Rowlands	Len Croney	Nigel Haselden	Rob Bull
James Scott	Lesley Banfield	Nigel Hugill	Rob Burns
Jason Kennedy	Lesley Robertson	Nigel Preston	Rob Thompson
Councillor Jayne McCoy	Liam Newton	Nigel Roberts	Robert Huxford
Jenny Ruder	Linda Gledstone	Nigel Thorne	Robert Keeling
Jeremy Blackburn	Lisa Broom	Nik King	Robert Offord
Jerry Spencer	Lisa Jackson	Noël James	Robert Powell
Jim Chapman	Lisa Pritchard	Noha Nasser	Robert Scrimgeour
Jim Claydon	Louise Cutts	Patrick Grincell	Robin Dobson
Jo Byrne	Louise Thomas	Patrick Phillips	Councillor Robin Studd
Joanna Averley	Lynne Ceeney	Paul Bramhill	Robin Webster
Joanna Robinson	Dr. Lynne Mitchell	Paul Collins	Roger Ayton
Joanna Spinks	Lynne Stevendale	Paul Fletcher	Roger Coy
Joao Bento	Maggie Bolt	Paul Goodchild	Roger Dowty
Joe Holyoak	Malcolm Newton	Paul Koralek	Roger Hephper
Joe Montgomery	Marcus Chaloner	Paul Lincoln	Ron Presswell
John Barker	Maritz Vandenberg	Paul Morrell	Rosemary Coyne
John Dowsett	Mark Brearley	Peter Allen	Rosemary MacQueen
Councillor John Gardner	Mark Chaplin	Peter Chan	Rowland Homes-Smith
John Higgins	Mark Green	Councillor Peter Greenhalgh	Roy Collado
John Kellett	Mark Lemanski	Peter Karpinsky	Russell Reefer
John Letherland	Mark Massey	Peter Murray	Ruth Rolls
John Peverley	Mark Pearson	Peter O'Brien	Sarah Ichoika
John Plumridge	Martin Stockley	Peter Rees	Sarah Jones
John Sorrell	Martin van Zeller	Peter Shovlin	Sarah Moore
John Stonard	Martin Westgate	Peter Tompkins	Sarah Wells
John Thorpe	Martin Young	Peter Wilkinson	Scott Ritchie
John Watkins	Martina Juvara	Phil Bowley	Sebastian Hanley
Jon Rouse	Mary Thoroughgood	Phil Heenan	Simon Baker
Jon Wallsgrove	Matt Bridgestock	Phil Jones	Simon Blakeley
Jon Jo MacNamara	Matt Brook	Phil Smith	Simon Carne
Jonathan Crowhurst	Matt Verlander	Philip Singleton	Simon Harrison
Jonathan Freeman	Matthew Edwards	Professor Lorraine Farrelly	Simon Ricketts
Jonathan Platt	Matthew Jarratt	Professor Bill Morrison	Sophia de Sousa
Jonathan Rickard	Matthew Nicholson	Dr. Rachael Luck	Stefan Kruczkowski
Jonathan Steele	Meredith Evans	Rachel Hough	Stephen Broadbent
Jules Brown	Michael Brooke	Rachel Rooney	Stephen Hill
Julian Kashdan-Brown	Michael Crilly	Rachel Stephenson	Stephen Hodder
Julie Tanner	Councillor Michael Gibbard	Rakhi Rajani	Steve Dallaway
Juliet Bidgood	Michael Griffin	Randip Singh Bahra	Steve Lyttle
Karen Cook	Mike Baulcombe	Rhodri Samuel	Steve McAdam
Kate Fewson	Councillor Mike Galloway	Richard Crutchley	Steve Purden
Kate Henderson	Mike Menzies	Richard Motley	Steven Bee
Katie Cooke	Mike Rawlinson	Richard Portchmouth	Steven Lyttle
Keith Williams	Neil Woodhouse	Richard Pugh	Stewart Currie
Ken Harrison	Nick Dixon	Richard Rose-Casemore	Stewart Satchell
Kerri Farnsworth	Nick Johnson	Richard Serra	Stuart Lipton

Stuart Turner
Sudha Oza
Sue Brown
Sue Green
Sue McGlynn
Tanya Griffiths
Theo Goodall
Thomas Bender
Tim Hagyard
Councillor Tim Wotherspoon
Timothy Cantell
Timothy Crawshaw
Councillor Tom Brindley
Tom Lonsdale
Tony Burton
Tony Wyatt
Trevor Beattie
Trevor Osborne
Victoria Thornton
Vincent Goodstadt
Councillor Vincent Stops
Wei Yang
Wendy Shillam
Will Lingard
William Chaplin

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across the country.

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Crawley Library
Creating Excellence
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Financial Dynamics
GreenLink
GreenSpace
Heritage Lottery Fund
Home Builder's Federation
Inclusion by Design Group
Integreat Plus
Kent Architecture Centre
MADE
National Housing Federation
North East Design Review
and Enabling Service
Opun
PlacesMatter!
RICS Land and Society
Commission
Savills
Shape East
Site Gallery Studio
UK Regeneration
Urban Design Group

Appendix 03:

High level summary of written responses

This summary draws together both the written submissions and responses to the online questionnaire, which comes to a total of just over 100 submissions. They reflect the same issues and concerns raised at the roundtables and workshops where we saw over 300 people. All in all this represents a significant amount of interest in the review from across the public, private and voluntary sectors of the industry.

The questions and responses:

1.

The introduction of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and the systematic reforms of the Localism Bill will create a different national planning landscape for design policy. What are the key issues of planning policy that Government should take into account in order to deliver on their promise good design through the new planning system?

- The consolidation of planning policy into one shorter document is welcome, and many stakeholders would encourage the incorporation of the design aspects in PPS1, PPS3 etc.
- Good design in the system should be supported in primary legislation and national policy, but also in local/neighbourhood plans, without being overly prescriptive.
- Good design must be an implicit element of sustainable development. This is an opportunity to ensure that the essence of good design is embedded in sustainable development principles.

- The planning system should explicitly address principles of good, distinctive place-making and fitness for purpose.
- There should be a focus on the creation and enhancement of places and impacts on climate change, health etc. should be considered.
- The NPPF could be a way of drawing together national agenda items such as transport, housing, energy and open space.
- Guidance on what constitutes ‘good design’ should be set out. Specifically, local authorities should be encouraged to produce locally specific design guidance to ensure a high quality, locally specific, built environment.
- The Localism Bill is likely to add increased pressures on local authority and other public sector resources as well as the decision making process.
- Grounds for refusal for inappropriate design and measure for enforcement which cover landscape as well as building requirements should be included.

Some other comments made were:

- Inclusive Design should be made an explicit requirement in the NPPF as per the current PPS1 and included in the definition of sustainable development.

2.

In your experience, what are the specific issues affecting the delivery of well-designed development? Are there any particular issues at the moment?

- There is a lot of complex guidance that could be simplified with clear statements.
- There needs to be more communication about what design can achieve, such as better safety, health, functionality, environmental and well-being outcomes as well as cost-savings.
- A widespread belief that there is a lack of expertise in local planning authorities and at the national level and that there is a general lack of confidence to demand/judge good design which is being exacerbated by cuts.
- That there is a general acceptance of bad design from everyone involved in the process due to a lack of understanding what good design is, and lack of expertise to make judgements about good design.
- That there is not enough overt criticism about bad design.
- That while the procurement process is placing a greater premium on good design, the process has become so expensive and complicated that it's driving good design out.
- An increase in micromanagement at the local authority level has led to a process that is slow, costly and litigious.
- The loss of design agenda momentum due to the changing political and legal context as well as cuts to longer term funding streams (BSF and HMR are two).
- There is a lack of communication between the players in the process, including between departments at local authorities.

- Local plans are seen as important and well-intentioned but not yet working. Plans are often incomprehensible to both communities and professionals, and the public has yet to be engaged. Neighbourhood planning must be used to engage people in creating vision for their area without being overly prescriptive.
- There is a lack of appreciation of contextual design and an unwillingness to undertake bespoke design, especially for housing schemes.

3.

What are the existing sources of design support across England? How accessible are they? Who delivers them? Who accesses this support? Will this need to change in response to the localism agenda, and if so how? How effective are these means of support, and at what point in the planning and development process are they best delivered?

- Demise of CABE Space leaves a gap in design support services for open space – both in terms of support directly to parks and green space managers but also to local authorities.
- Local authorities and developers tend to rely on their staff or consultant teams – though LA's are reducing skilled staff.
- Communities (small towns, parishes etc.) tend to look for more local support, i.e. RTPi Planning Aid, Local Civic Societies, Action for Market Towns.

4.

Design Review:

Design Council Cobe's Design Review service provides free expert advice on the design quality of schemes in England that will have a significant impact on their environment. There are also, eight independent sub-national design review panels that are affiliated with Design Council Cobe, forming a network that provides consistent and good quality design advice across the country.

a.

Have you ever been involved in Design Review? If so how many roles – as a panellist, a design team member, developer?

b.

In your view does DR work best as a final seal of approval at the end of the planning application process, or as part of an iterative process with multiple engagements with the panel from pre application discussions through to the final decision – or both?

c.

Is this still a valid model of support for good design?

d.

Given the increased role of local people in developing proposals, do you think that there should be community representation as part of the design review process? How might that work?

e.

If payment for Design Review were to be introduced, what charging mechanisms might be appropriate? Can this be reconciled with perceived and actual conflicts of interest?

f.

What are the factors that led you to use Design Review?

g.

How do you assess which Design Review panel service you will use?

- Design review is a process that can achieve a positive impact, both as a single or multiple review process, especially when aligned with other design support services.
- The design review model represents good value, especially in the current climate.
- There is the worry that Design Review Panels can be confrontational in nature, which might discourage schemes from being submitted.
- Design Review should be an iterative process, which schemes being seen as early in the application process as possible where they are seen as enabling development rather than another hurdle and where changes can be made without being costly.
- One of the issues brought up with Design Review Panels is that is very difficult to deal with many of the issues about procurement, economic viability, and sustainability that are fundamental to their success in an hour or two.
- Some submissions questioned whether there have been assessments done on the value of regular design reviews.
- There was some suggestion that they should be used more as a sounding board for emerging concepts to assist design teams in developing schemes which address perceived challenges and opportunities.
- There should be a stronger relationship with planning policy so that the outcome of the review means something.
- Charging for Design Review seen as challenging, especially when a client or developer is already reluctant to take a scheme to design review, but perhaps necessary.

Some ideas:

- As part of planning application fee.
- Similar to a consultancy service, paying for expert advice at a pre-agreed rate.
- The local planning authority could pay the cost of a Design Review Panel and recover the cost from a planning application scaled tariff on applications.
- Local design review panels have been successful in supporting the needs in regions and could be developed further to support the localism agenda although there has been a historical lack of clarity with the relationship of regional panels to other national panels.
- There is a role for local/regional Design Review to play in schemes that are not part of our exemplar programmes or are too small to be reviewed by the national panel, but are still significant.
- Having community representatives on design review panels could add local knowledge to reviews as well as encourage meaningful engagement with the local community, although training would be needed.

5.

Enabling/Local Design Support:

CABE maintained a panel of enablers, experts who were able to work on short contracts with local authorities, public sector clients and communities, acting as a critical friend and resource in creating built environment policies and projects. This ranged from advice on Open Space Strategies to the design of new hospitals and schools. One of the key contributions of the Enabling support was the development of public sector client skills, ensuring that people were able to procure well designed public buildings and spaces. Design support services are also provided by a range of national and sub-national groups, so that Design Council Cabé will be a part of a growing support system across England.

a.

Have you been involved in Enabling, if so how?

b.

What is the relationship between local delivery agencies, such as architecture centres or civic societies and a more central resource such as Architecture Centre Network, Civic Voice, or Design Council Cabé in terms of providing support to local authorities and communities?

c.

Should a central body be providing hands on support to local groups, or more indirect support such as pooling best practice?

d.

Do the requisite skills exist at local level to support the localism agenda?

e.

What types of design support are required e.g. for communities procuring new buildings and spaces, neighbourhood planning, local authority support in incorporating emerging neighbourhood plans into core strategies etc?

f.

Given the multiple providers of design support/enabling, is there a need for guidance to ensure consistency of quality and approach?

- Enabling is an economic, flexible and high impact way of dealing with the design agenda while others.
- A central resource like CABA is potentially better placed to bring good practice experience and examples from wider (national/international) base and to provide a pool of high level expertise from different fields (e.g. urban design, landscape, energy, architecture, policy planning, communications, etc.). Central resource can commission and publish topic-based research, disseminate information and host cpd or promotional events. More local resources have local knowledge, experience and contacts and may potentially be able to allocate more time to support a given project. However, a major strength of the CABA Enabling model has been its national network of enablers, who deliver a range of skills from a wide geographic spread.
- Design Council CABA should look at feedback it has received in the past about enabling and learn lessons from enablers, clients, developers and partners.
- Organisations involved in design support services (ie Design Council CABA, Architecture Centre Network, Rural Communities Action Network, Civic Voice) should work together to avoid duplication – maybe have a roundtable forum.
- A national body is better placed to act as a facilitator of enabling/design support that is remote from local political concerns. Can draw on experts with national/international experience who may live/work locally or can provide an independent voice from outside the area.
- There should be an enabling pool that is more widely available, wider range of people and supported by a wider network of organisations.
- Social media/interactive communications should be used more imaginatively and effectively to make an enabling pool more responsive and openly communicative with local partners.
- Local design skills insufficient to support Localism agenda. Skills locally, but not suitable/available for design enabling or support. LA budgets constrained and regional expertise being lost. Increased community powers means access is needed to a wide range of skills – planning, greenspace, economics, transport and facilitating.

6.

Are there any other key issues that you think should be considered as part of this review?

- Building for Life is seen as one of the more successful CABA tools and many of the submissions commented about it not being mentioned as part of the review.
- That more training/education and design awareness is needed for public sector workers involved in design decisions as well as for those in the community.

About the author

Peter trained in town planning at Manchester University and has spent his entire career working in London.

Over the past 25 years he has been a Planning director in four different Central London Boroughs and has worked on major projects including Canary Wharf, the development of the BBC's campus at White City and the Kings Cross development.

In 2006 he was appointed as the first Director of Design for London, the Mayor's architecture and design studio. He is an advisor to the Mayor of London and a Director at the architectural firm Allies and Morrison.

Peter lectures and teaches extensively, is a visiting professor at the Faculty of Architecture and the Built Environment at the Nottingham Trent University, an honorary fellow of University College London and an honorary fellow of the RIBA.



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CABE is now part of the Design Council