NILGA Webinar

the importance of design in place-shaping and place-making

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www.communities-ni.gov.uk

An Roinn Pobal

Männystrie o Communities
what does good design look like?
buyer beware!
all that glitters isn’t necessarily gold, when it comes to the design of good places!
it’s not a beauty contest!
good design creates and shapes good places, resolving issues, fulfilling potential and achieving required outcomes
seductive visualisations may look good, but not actually deliver required outcomes
expect good designs to deliver the required outcomes and look great
... so, what outcomes might be required?
carbon neutral by 2050
climate change act
health & wellbeing

physical inactivity costs the UK £7.4 billion a year, including more than £0.9bn to the NHS
natural environment

outdoor play fosters children’s intellectual, emotional, social and physical development.

promote biodiversity
cultural diversity
welcoming, inclusive places for all
homes and communities
improving the quality of life for all
workplaces

well standard offices and eco-friendly factories
heritage contributes 1.9% GDP and is the focus of 14.8% of tourist visits
high streets
diverse, distinctive and increasingly resilient
what are the levers that we can use?
While European cities have developed sophisticated laws and regulations ("hard power") to secure diverse public interest objectives through the governance of urban design, the quality of the resulting urban places can be disappointing. Often outcomes are not aligned with commonly shared objectives such as creating environmental sustainability, human scale, land use mix, conviviality, inclusivity, or supporting cultural meaning. At its core, the coordination and support action “Urban Maestro” aims to understand and encourage innovation in the field of urban design governance through a better understanding of alternative non-regulatory ("soft power") approaches and their contribution to the quality of the built environment.
what can councils do?
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**hard powers**

- **laws**
  - environmental legislation
  - health & safety
  - building regulations
  - equality

- **incentives**
  - grants

- **policies**
  - architecture + built environment
  - planning policies

  - local development plans
    - ensure that they are crafted to emphasise the importance of good design
    - design & access statements align with the qualities of living places
    - highlight the role of design review

**soft powers**

- **Guidance**
  - Living Places

- **Advice**
  - briefing advice
  - design reviews
  - mentoring

- **Co-Design**

- **Pilot Projects**
  - testing and learning
what can councils do?

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Co-Design

Pilot Projects
- testing and learning
the fear of subjectivity ...
Ask for Beauty
We do not see beauty as a cost, to be negotiated away once planning permission has been obtained. It is the benchmark that all new developments should meet. It includes everything that promotes a healthy and happy life, everything that makes a collection of buildings into a place, everything that turns anywhere into somewhere, and nowhere into home. So understood beauty should be an essential condition for the grant of planning permission.

Refuse Ugliness
People do not only want beauty in their surroundings. They are repelled by ugliness, which is a social cost that everyone is forced to bear. Ugliness means buildings that are unadaptable, unhealthy and unsightly, and which violate the context in which they are placed. Such buildings destroy the sense of place, undermine the spirit of community, and ensure that we are not at home in our world.

Promote Stewardship
Our built environment and our natural environment belong together. Both should be protected and enhanced for the long-term benefit of the communities that depend on them. Settlements should be renewed, regenerated and cared for, and we should end the scandal of left-behind places, where derelict buildings and vandalised public spaces drive people away. New developments should be regenerative, enhancing their environment and adding to the health, sustainability and biodiversity of their context. For too long now we have been exploiting and spoiling our country. The time has come to enhance and care for it instead. Our recommendations are designed to ensure that we pass on to future generations an inheritance at least as good as the one we have received.
the importance of making good decisions
10 Qualities

- Visionary
- Responsible
- Accessible
- Collaborative
- Hospitable
- Crafted
- Vibrant and Diverse
- Sustainable
- Enduring
make good decisions

initial ideas
chief executives, directors, elected representatives, developers

establish an ethos where quality of placemaking is expected – **every decision counts**

be aware of existing strategies – masterplans, etc – **consolidate earlier good decisions**

recognise decisions that will have a spatial impact

encourage key decision makers to have people that they can trust to bounce ideas off

share ideas – **collaboration is good**
make good decisions

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defining the project – scoping, writing the brief
project outcomes, extents, skills, programme, approach

get advice – it’s difficult to recover from a brief that isn’t all that it could/should be

consider different processes – co-design; piloting/testing and learning
make good decisions

procurement
alignment of project objectives with the way of delivering them

going procurement right is essential – ensure alignment of priorities and how to achieve them

embed design quality safeguards – make the most of tools such as design reviews (PGN)
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design teams
the right skills, appropriate leadership

getting the right team – procuring the most appropriate team

getting the most out of design teams

good leadership - makes good design more likely

empowering design teams – encouraging them to fulfil the potential of the project
make good decisions

clients

intelligent clients, who have the skills to fulfil the potential of a project

understand and challenge design decisions throughout – design decisions should be explained not presented

understand how stakeholder engagement has informed design decisions

use independent design reviews to introduce complementary expertise

empower design teams to make good design decisions
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draw on advice of experts to make well-informed, confident decisions

identify the significance of projects at an early stage

draw on specialist expertise to complement in-house skills

use independent design reviews as an integral part of the planning process

make confident, well informed recommendations
make good decisions

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Working Collaboratively,

Providing Placemaking Leadership ...