



Item 12

Report to the Partnership for Urban South Hampshire Joint Committee

Date: **23 March 2010**

Report of: **Paul Ramshaw, Head of Regeneration and Planning Policy, Eastleigh Borough Council and Simon Eden, Lead Chief Executive, Quality Place Delivery Panel**

Subject: **Design in the Built Environment: Creating Quality Places in South Hampshire**

SUMMARY

Support for the principle of good design is an essential component of creating quality places in South Hampshire. Place-making is in turn of fundamental importance to building strong, sustainable communities, attracting inward investment and securing a good quality of life for our residents, workers and visitors.

The work of the QPDP and its Design Practitioners Group is progressing at a good pace. The Group will deliver a range of tools and processes that will add up to a robust but deliverable quality control system. Nationally our work is being seen as an excellent example of good practice, and an exemplar of how to integrate design with the growth agenda.

This report outlines work in hand and seeks the positive endorsement of the Joint Committee to confirm the commitment of all PUSH authorities to adopting a robust approach to securing good design.

RECOMMENDATIONS

That the PUSH Joint Committee:-

1. Notes progress of the work of the PUSH Quality Place Delivery Panel on design in the built environment;
2. Endorses the importance of member authorities adopting high standards of design and encourage active engagement with all the strands of work outlined in this report;
3. Agrees to officers developing a "Quality Place Design Charter" committing member authorities to the principles of good design, and to be signed by Leaders and Chief Executives; and
4. Notes the funding commitments necessary if this work is to be completed.

INTRODUCTION

1. The PUSH strategy adopted as part of the South East Plan indicates the obligation under the South East Plan to develop 80,000 new dwellings and 2,000,000m² of employment space across the PUSH sub-region by 2026. The Quality Place Delivery Panel (QPDP) is tasked with putting measures in place to ensure that both new and existing development is of a sufficiently high quality that it makes a positive contribution to the quality of life of those who live and work in South Hampshire.
2. The QPDP Business Plan includes a work stream on Design in the Built Environment. That originates from a recognition that the appearance and character of the built environment is crucial to the sense of 'place' we seek for South Hampshire, and is an essential of sustainable communities. The projects being pursued seek to give a firm basis for members of the Partnership to incorporate the highest standards of design into our work. This report outlines the work in hand and suggests that member authorities should make a formal commitment to the principles of good design.

BACKGROUND

3. In February 2009 the South East England Development Agency (SEEDA), South East Excellence and the Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment (CABE) sponsored and ran a two-day Quality Place Diagnostic Workshop on behalf of the PUSH Quality Place Delivery Panel. The first day was targeted at Council Leaders, Chief Executives and senior officers. The aim of this day was to demonstrate the value of, and make the business case for place making as a fundamentally important part of the PUSH growth agenda. High standards of urban design are central to place-making, and the second day was pitched at practitioners and was aimed at developing a practical Action Plan for taking this work forward.
4. CABE engaged an 'expert panel' of architects and design professionals for the Diagnostic Workshop which was tasked with analysing needs of the PUSH area and making a series of recommendations in the form of a report, subsequently presented to the Quality Place Delivery Panel. This report formed the basis of the Panel's "Design in the Built Environment" Action Plan, which has seven key elements:
 - i) Resources;
 - ii) Analysis;
 - iii) Assessment and Guidance;
 - iv) Processes;
 - v) Training;
 - vi) Design Review; and
 - vii) Design Awards.
5. The QPDP has taken these elements forward as follows:-

i) Resources:

In anticipation of the workshop event, CABE commissioned Tibbalds to undertake a review of design resources and skills available within PUSH

authorities and how they are employed. A list of key design contacts for each authority was established. This list was then utilised to bring together the **Quality Place Practitioners Group (QPPG)** – drawn from all PUSH authorities and Chaired by the Chief Executive of the Solent Centre for Architecture and Design, our regional architecture centre. This group has now met several times and is taking forward the Action Plan. The group is looking at how PUSH authorities can share resources and provide a high quality service in the most efficient way

ii) Analysis:

Three separate tools were identified as potential means for establishing the character and nature of the PUSH area. These are:-

- An understanding of the identity and character of the sub-region, being delivered through a joint commission from the QPDP and Economic Development Delivery Panel;
- HCC work on character appraisal, a separate project already under way that may meet many of the needs of the design work programme; and
- Quality Places mapping and analysis, being developed by the Solent Centre for Architecture & Design using a Google Earth based tool to express the outcome of the HCC work.

iii) Assessment/Guidance

An assessment tool is essential to guide how design can be factored into the development control decision-making process. This is based on a series of structured questions reflecting core principles of place-making. Those principles will in turn be set out in guidance giving clear, consistent and high standards which, it proposed, all authorities adopt through their LDF process.

Taken together these two tools will enable each authority to take a consistent approach to design and place-shaping through planning decisions, ensuring we adopt high standards whilst reflecting the specific environmental context of South Hampshire. It is proposed the Guidance be brought to the Joint Committee for endorsement before member authorities are invited to adopt it.

iv) Processes:

There are a number of stages at which we should seek to bring the principles of design and place-making into planning decisions:

- pre-application discussion;
- design & access statements;
- developers forums;
- pre-decision appraisal; and
- post completion appraisal.

There is significant benefit in ensuring consistency across PUSH authorities based on established best practice. The Practitioners Group continue to develop these practices and promote best practice within their own authorities based on shared knowledge within the Group.

v) Design Training:

The review of resources and skills by Tibbalds identified a need to develop design skills in planning and other teams across councils. The Solent Centre for Architecture and Design was commissioned to design and deliver a subscription based design-training programme. This programme is aimed at Councillors and officers who are not necessarily design practitioners, but who have an influence over the public realm. Its training has been jointly funded by PUSH, CABE, and individual authorities, although some authorities have struggled to contribute from limited training budgets. A PUSH contribution will be used to provide a bespoke programme of individual courses tailored to the action plan in 2010/11.

vi) Design Review:

Nationally, best practice is to seek the views of independent panels of design professionals on schemes of significance. The Action Plan sought to assess the existence and usage of design review panels in the sub-region with a view to bringing the existing panels together to ensure consistency. It has been agreed that the way forward is to create common terms of reference for all the PUSH panels, and agree an escalation protocol for referring larger developments up to the South East Regional Design Panel and CABE's national panel.

viii) Design Awards:

A sub-group of the Practitioner Group has been set up to deliver the first PUSH-wide Design Awards in 2010, with the objective of promoting high standards. The Solent Centre for Architecture and Design has put together a proposal to administer and run the Awards process. This will seek nominations in early 2010, for a judging day in the spring/summer and an awards ceremony in October. Commercial sponsorship is being sought.

Discussion is still taking place around the potential categories for these awards, although there is a common desire to provide a Community Award. The University of Portsmouth have also indicated that they would be interested in supporting a Student Award based on a place making competition.

SECURING A COMMITMENT TO GOOD DESIGN

- 6) The Joint Committee have previously acknowledged the importance of good design in our built environment. The HCA (who are taking a close interest in design) and CABE have stressed the importance of design and place-making in PUSH's work and are watching our performance and commitment closely. The HCA have expressed the view that creating quality places is a fundamental

element of the growth agenda and their support is conditional on development being high quality and sustainable.

- 7) However, as work has progressed it has sometimes been challenging to secure real commitment and buy-in to the agenda in all PUSH authorities. The Practitioners Group have sought to keep planners and others informed and engaged, but in a pressured environment design is not always afforded high priority. Not all authorities have accepted the importance of having the necessary skills, taking part in training or adopting consistent, sometimes challenging guidance.
- 8) In response the Practitioners Group plan a series of visits to member authorities to meet with the senior planning officer, senior development control officer and key Member (portfolio holder). These visits are designed to engage directly with the key people having direct political or managerial control of the areas concerned, and to ensure that the message is effectively disseminated.
- 9) A strong supportive message from the Joint Committee would assist in the process of raising standards across PUSH, and members are asked to agree two recommendations:
 - that they endorse the importance of member authorities adopting high standards of design and encourage active engagement with all the strands of work outlined in this report; and
 - they agree to officers developing a “Quality Place Design Charter” to be signed by Leaders and Chief Executives. This would commit member authorities to the principles of good design. If this is agreed, then a draft Charter will be brought back for formal endorsement shortly.

RESOURCES

- 10) The QPDP has budgeted to support work on design as follows:-

	2009/10	2010/11
Design Guidance –	£20,000	£10,000
Design Awards –	£10,000	£10,000
Design Training –	£15,000	£10,000

- 11) Authority support is also given through a commitment of staff time, particularly through input to the Practitioners Group. Internal resource will also be required to develop and adopt guidance. Some money has been put into taking up design training. No doubt some authorities developing a commitment to good design will want to consider how they resource this work in time.
- 12) CABE and SEEDA have also provided financial support, with the latter providing the support of Enablers. The HCA are considering the case for providing additional support.
- 13) All of the above funds have been allocated against individual project programmes and spend profiles. As these programmes have been taken forward, so timescales have altered, and the profiles outlined above are no

longer appropriate. Where this requires carry forwards, proposals will be put to the Joint committee in June.

RECOMMENDATION

That the PUSH Joint Committee:-

1. Notes progress of the work of the PUSH Quality Place Delivery Panel on design in the built environment;
2. Endorses the importance of member authorities adopting high standards of design and encourage active engagement with all the strands of work outlined in this report;
3. Agrees to officers developing a “Quality Place Design Charter” committing member authorities to the principles of good design, and to be signed by Leaders and Chief Executives; and
4. Notes the funding commitments necessary if this work is to be completed.

Background Papers: None

Reference Papers: None

Enquiries:

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