



Report to the Partnership for Urban South Hampshire Joint Committee

Date: 23 September 2014

Report of: Simon Eden (Chief Executive Lead) for Culture Creative Industries and the Built Environment Panel

Subject: Designing Quality Places: Progress with the Quality Places Charter and Solent Design Awards 2014

SUMMARY

PUSH has recognised one component of prosperity is the quality of the built environment. The Culture, Creative Industries & Built Environment Panel (CCIBE) has led work on design and place making over the past eight years, including developing shared policies, training and awards.

This report updates the PUSH Chief Executives Group on the work of the Quality Places Practitioners Group (QPPG), which is made up of design professionals from PUSH authorities. Whilst much good progress is being made, it is timely to review our shared commitment to good design, and the further steps we could take to up our game.

The report:

- Summarises progress against commitment PUSH authorities made when signing the Quality Places Charter and makes recommendations for action;
- Updates Members on progress with the 2014 Solent Design Awards.

RECOMMENDATION

It is RECOMMENDED that the PUSH Joint Committee:

1. NOTES the outcome of the QPPG's report '*Implementing the PUSH Quality Places Charter....Summary of responses to the Questionnaire 2013*' (see appendix 2)
2. AGREES
 - PUSH authorities should re-affirm their commitment to the 7 principles set out in the 2010 PUSH Quality Places Charter (see Appendix 1);
 - member authorities will encourage relevant officers to attend the quarterly QPPG meetings and take an active part in the work programme;
 - member authorities review the leadership given by Lead Members and Planning Management/Development Control Teams, to ensure that high standards of urban design are given high priority and are adequately resourced to inform decisions on development proposals which affect the public realm;
 - the QPPG should consider opportunities for sharing and enhancing in-house urban design skills across the area, to facilitate meeting the Charter's commitments;
 - member authorities support the efforts of the QPPG to ensure all authorities have access to effective design review skills;
 - member authorities support the development of high quality design awareness training for Councillors and Officers, and commit to including that within their wider training programmes;
 - member authorities commit to the preparation and publication of urban design guidance and its adoption as SPD.
3. NOTES the progress in preparing for the 2014 Solent Design Awards.

INTRODUCTION

1. Urban design is the process of shaping the physical setting for life in cities, towns and villages. It is the art of making places. It involves the design of buildings, groups of buildings, spaces and landscapes, and establishing the processes that make successful development possible.
2. Good urban design is a central element of a successful place: one that helps the local economy and community makes a place good to live in and attractive place to visit. Done well, design can help create community identity and assist in delivering better public services, reducing crime and anti-social behaviour. It also helps to achieve value for money in new developments and to make good use of scarce resources.
3. The Quality Places Practitioners Group (QPPG) was set up by the Culture, Creative Industries and the Built Environment Panel (formerly PUSH Quality Places Delivery Panel) and originally consisted of LA urban designers and other design professionals directly involved in improving the quality of the built environment within the PUSH area. The QPPG has now extended its membership and invites local authority urban designers from all authorities in Hampshire. The group meets quarterly, and have a strong core membership which includes Basingstoke, Eastleigh, Fareham, Havant, IOW, NFDC, SDNP, Southampton and Winchester. They have led the setting up of Urban Design Group (Solent), a forum for urban designers within the Solent sub region which shares practices, skills and ideas.
4. Current work of the QPPG includes:
 - Promoting implementation of the PUSH Quality Places Charter;
 - Supporting and promoting the Solent Design Awards;
 - Joint Member and Officer Training;
 - Supporting the preparation of guidance on good design; and
 - A variety of local initiatives.

PUSH QUALITY PLACES CHARTER

5. The PUSH Quality Places Charter was launched and signed by all Leaders of the 11 Push authorities at the 2010 Solent Design Awards Ceremony. The Charter (at appendix 1) commits each PUSH authority to 7 principles:
 - To adopt leadership and management practices which will ensure that the design of quality places is given a high profile
 - To adopt a design led multidisciplinary culture and working practices
 - To adopt strong design planning policy and urban design guidance
 - To make decisions which are based on delivering quality and which are not based on cost alone

- To improve the quality of existing places
 - To implement design awareness training for councillors and officers
 - To involve the community in the design and management of places
6. In 2013 the QPPG undertook a survey to measure progress on the delivery of the 7 principles by the PUSH authorities. A questionnaire was sent to all member authorities (including those outside the PUSH area). The responses are summarised in see appendix 2 (*Implementing the PUSH Quality Places Charter.... Summary of responses to the Questionnaire 2013*).
7. The results from the survey suggest patchy progress. Whilst it is unfair to suggest slow progress may reflect lack of commitment, particularly where resources are stretched, there is more that could be done to reflect commitments made. Notable issues include:
- in some authorities urban design was given a relatively low priority in the Planning Management/Development Control Team, and several authorities felt they lacked the appropriate urban design skills;
 - whilst all authorities have design policies in their Local Plans, little progress had been made in the production of specific urban design guidance in the form of a Supplementary Planning Document – although it's worth noting a number of authorities are in the process of preparing urban design guidance:
 - most, though not all, Hampshire local authorities have access to a local design review panels, although in some areas they are not regularly used. Where they are used, the design quality of the public realm has been enhanced. QPPG have assisted in the review of some local panels, but would like to see all authorities in PUSH and wider Hampshire have access to local design review panels which operate in line with government guidelines and which are used regularly;
 - few authorities provide design awareness training for Councillors and Officers. The Government encourages such training to enable better and more informed decision-making.
8. Members have already expressed their strong support for the promotion of high standards of urban design by signing the Quality Places Charter, and PUSH has supported a number of high profile capital projects designed to enhance the urban realm across the area. However, in times of austerity it can sometimes be seen as a luxury to employ urban design professionals. Equally, it can be hard to resist pleas from developers to do away with what they portray as the additional cost of good design.
9. Unsurprisingly, the professional officers on the QPPG are committed to driving forward the urban design agenda within PUSH and the wider

Hampshire area. Members of the group are active in their authorities and often share their skills and experiences with other authorities either as part of the QPPG or as members of the Urban Design Group (Solent). An effective way of continuing to press forward the design agenda is to harness the commitment of the QPPG and support their work on a number of fronts. There are six recommended actions which can assist in securing better design across South Hampshire:

- if all PUSH authorities made a commitment to engage with the QPPG and ensure they are represented, they can be a powerful vehicle for delivering better design, whilst at the same time making best use of the resource we have available across the area;
- any commitment begins at home, and PUSH authorities are invited to consider the priority they place within their own Planning Management/Development Control Teams on design advice and skills, whether in-house or otherwise procured. This is not solely about resource, it begins with a commitment to taking full account of design, procuring advice and taking design into account in judging applications. Key will be leadership from senior politicians;
- capacity remains an issue for all authorities, and not all are in a position to retain in-house urban design skills. The QPPG should be invited to develop a model for sharing of expertise, whether through sharing of appropriately skilled officers, joint procurement of external advice, sharing of best practice or joint programmes for developing skills and awareness in planning officers;
- the QPPG is also keen that every authority has access to a local design review panel which is operated in accordance with best practice. Design review panels are independent panels whose members are practicing design professionals working outside the local authority. They offer independent advice to developers and agents on how schemes can be improved. There are well established panels with Hampshire, some reflecting best practice advice on how they work. The QPPG should be invited to work with all PUSH authorities to develop the panels across the area and promote their use – which needs to be supported by a local political commitment to using panels for key applications;
- PUSH has in the past supported a programme of design awareness and place-making training for Councillors and Officers. Whilst all acknowledge this is important, resources can all too often restrict opportunities to deliver that training. The Group, with the help of the UDG (Solent) is developing a training model (piloted by WCC and EBC) which is to take place in the spring 2015. If the model is successful we anticipate that it can be rolled out to other authorities in Hampshire and beyond, and the JC are invited to support that development and encourage attendance from their own authorities; and

- where the principles of good design are incorporated in local planning policy frameworks, Councils have a powerful tool to support place-making. All have made progress through Local Plans, but it is recommended all authorities also review the case for encapsulating detailed guidance in a Supplementary Planning Document, to give it maximum impact.

SOLENT DESIGN AWARDS

10. PUSH has run a biennial Solent Design Award since 2010 to celebrate best practice in place making and design in the built environment. The Awards are an essential aspect of promoting and encouraging high standards of urban design across our area. The third programme of awards was launched in August, with, for the third time, sponsorship from Bouygues UK and, for the first time, the Urban Design Group. PUSH Partner Authorities have been asked to nominate appropriate projects for consideration. Award Categories include:
 - Quality Place – Projects which make the greatest contribution to enhancing quality of place in the Solent Area.
 - Urban Design – Best examples of Urban Design.
 - Public Vote – The most popular new buildings in the Solent Area. The vote is facilitated in partnership with the Portsmouth News and Southampton Echo.
11. The Awards evening will be held in the Mary Rose Visitor Centre, Portsmouth on 20th November 2014. JC Members are invited to note the date in their diaries.

CONCLUSION

12. The National Planning Policy Framework and National Planning Policy Guidance emphasise the importance of achieving high quality urban design in the planning process. Having in-house urban design skills or access to agencies that can quickly and effectively provide urban design guidance should be an essential part of the Planning Management process. The Planning Inspectorate is supporting local authorities at appeal when they are able to provide well informed reasoning why development is deficient on design grounds. But this case cannot be made without suitably skilled and qualified professionals.
13. PUSH authorities have shown their commitment to good design. However, there is more that can be done to enhance our ability to deliver this aspiration, in many cases without additional resource. The recommendations of this report set out how further progress against commitments in the PUSH Quality Places Charter can be achieved.

RECOMMENDATION

It is RECOMMENDED that the PUSH Joint Committee

14. NOTES the outcome of the QPPG's report '*Implementing the PUSH Quality Places Charter....Summary of responses to the Questionnaire 2013*' (see appendix 2)
15. AGREES
 - PUSH authorities should re-affirm their commitment to the 7 principles set out in the 2010 PUSH Quality Places Charter (see Appendix 1);
 - member authorities will encourage relevant officers to attend the quarterly QPPG meetings and take an active part in the work programme;
 - member authorities review the leadership given by Lead Members and Planning Management/Development Control Teams, to ensure that high standards of urban design are given high priority and are adequately resourced to inform decisions on development proposals which affect the public realm;
 - the QPPG should consider opportunities for sharing and enhancing in-house urban design skills across the area, to facilitate meeting the Charter's commitments;
 - member authorities support the efforts of the QPPG to ensure all authorities have access to effective design review skills;
 - member authorities support the development of high quality design awareness training for Councillors and Officers, and commit to including that within their wider training programmes;
 - member authorities commit to the preparation and publication of urban design guidance and its adoption as SPD.
16. NOTES the progress in preparing for the 2014 Solent Design Awards.

Background Papers:

Appendix 1 PUSH Quality Places Charter

Appendix 2 Implementing the PUSH Quality Places Charter....Summary of responses to the Questionnaire 2013

Reference Papers:

None

Enquiries:

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For further information on the Solent Design Awards 2014 please contact:

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Principle of Quality Places

A group of 11 local authorities in Hampshire. The area is a focus for plans to undertake development and change over time. PUSH recognises that such changes will be important to the area's future and is equally concerned to ensure that the development is delivered at the highest quality and is designed and managed to create quality places for the benefit of existing and future residents, businesses and visitors.

For South Hampshire

We have good quality places in Hampshire, environmental and social conditions. This is widely recognised by research. High quality places generate greater social value for local authorities such as places and buildings that are attractive and help to create a sense of settlement helping to attract investment and making it a place to live, work and play.

For South Hampshire it is to create high quality places, their delivery and management and supported by PUSH authority's priorities and objectives.

Quality place?

A quality place has a number of components which are defined in the diagram on the right. Each component, taken together, is at the heart of the kind of places that PUSH wishes to see in the public realm of the area over the next 10 years. PUSH recognises that

the components should not be applied to new development alone, but are equally applicable to the management of existing settlements, neighbourhoods, streets, open spaces and buildings. Equally, it is important to ensure that management and development is of the highest possible quality and is applied to small scale as well as high profile and large scale proposals.



Components of Quality Place diagram

Delivering Quality Places

A Commitment from PUSH
The PUSH authorities are committed to the creation of quality places. We recognise the different components that combine to create quality places and will ensure implementation of place-making principles and the processes for their delivery. We acknowledge that we must collaborate and cooperate with the many other organisations and bodies responsible for the management and development of the public realm to achieve high quality places.

Signed by all PUSH authorities:
Delivering high quality places and buildings cannot be achieved through a statement of intent alone. PUSH recognises that it is equally important that appropriate delivery mechanisms and processes are in place. Each local authority in South Hampshire, as signatory to the charter, is committed to delivering the following:

- ▶ Leadership and management structures to ensure that creating quality places is a high priority
- ▶ A design led multi-disciplinary culture which plans, designs and manages new and existing places in an integrated way to achieve high quality outcomes
- ▶ Place-making and quality design policies which underpin Development Plan Documents, including detailed guidance on creating high quality development where necessary
- ▶ Decision making which uses the wider value of creating quality places as a prime consideration rather than cost alone
- ▶ Opportunities to improve the quality and management of existing places
- ▶ Appropriate place awareness and design training for leaders, councillors and officers
- ▶ Community involvement in the planning, design and management of places

"We call upon those organic bodies to commit to delivering making components identify charter."

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Councillor Carr, Test Valley
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Councillor R. Smith, South Hart
- 
Councillor B. Rickman, New
- 
Councillor K. House, Eastleigh
- 
Councillor S. DT Woodward,
- 
Councillor K. Learney, Winchester
- 
Councillor M. Hook, Gosport
- 
Councillor G. Vernon-Jackson
- 
Councillor A. Briggs, Havant
- 
Councillor E. East, Easington
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Councillor Dr R. Ellis, Hampshire

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© CABE Research (Sept 2008) and the Value - handbook 2006.
Adapted from 'World Class Places' - ICLD and DCMS, May 2009.



Implementing the PUSH Quality Places Charter

Summary of responses to the Questionnaire 2013

DRAFT

The PUSH Quality Places Charter was adopted by PUSH, launched and signed by all Leaders of authorities in PUSH (at the time) at the inaugural Solent Design Awards on October 2010. It is important to note that the Charter and PUSH design Guidance template are referenced and key design principles that support the ethos of the Charter are included in Policy 5 - Quality Places - of the South Hampshire Strategy (October 2012), which is to be updated in 2014.

The Quality Places Practitioners Group (QPPG), which includes representatives from all current PUSH authorities and those whose boundaries cross Hampshire's, agreed to prepare a survey questionnaire to monitor progress on the objectives set out in the charter. This summary of the responses has been prepared by Kay Brown, Planning Policy, Conservation and Design Team Leader at Southampton City Council with input from the wider QPPG.

A letter was sent by Simon Eden, PUSH Culture, Creative Industries & the Build Environment Lead to the Chief Executives of each Council in May 2013, as listed below:

PUSH Authorities:

- East Hampshire District Council
- Eastleigh Borough Council
- Fareham Borough Council
- Gosport Borough Council
- Hampshire County Council
- Havant Borough Council
- Isle of Wight Council (not a member when Charter signed)
- New Forest District Council
- Portsmouth City Council
- Southampton City Council
- Test Valley Borough Council
- Winchester City Council

Non PUSH authorities:

- Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council
- Hart District Council
- Rushmoor Borough Council
- New Forest National Park Authority
- South Downs National Park Authority

Out of the 12 PUSH authorities seven responses have been received. Two responses from non PUSH authorities have also been received. It is notable that authorities not submitting a response are also not active on the QPPG.

In signing the Charter each authority committed to implementing a series of seven delivery principles. Authorities were invited to respond to the survey setting out what progress they are making towards these objectives to achieve 'good quality places'.

A summary of the responses is outlined below under the heading of each of the seven delivery principles:

1. Leadership and management structures to ensure that creating quality places is a high priority.

Most authorities do not have Member Design Champions though some do have provision for them. Heads of Service have a remit for design but generally this is not given any specific importance. Winchester is the exception in its Chief Executive's role as Quality Places Delivery Panel Theme Lead but the recently proposed reorganisation of PUSH is changing the emphasis of this to a more generic cultural theme.

Design practitioners are generally represented in teams associated with planning policy. A few authorities are relatively well resourced with design trained practitioners however there are some notable exceptions where resources are relatively much lower; these authorities appear to put much less emphasis on the quality places agenda. The current austerity measures are forcing all authorities to reconsider staffing and reduce these resources further.

The notion of creating quality places is embedded in most core plans and policies and achieving 'local distinctiveness' is a key objective of a number of the authorities.

Generally progress reports on the Charter or design objectives are not made, nor is the Charter displayed in a prominent or public location. However authorities who have not adopted the Charter have been keen to make use of the draft Design Principles SPD as a basis for developing their own design guidance.

2. A design-led multi-disciplinary culture which plans, designs and manages new and existing places in an integrated way to achieve high quality outcomes.

All authorities reported a multi-disciplinary culture, often enhanced by multi-disciplinary teams in the organisational structure. However in authorities where there are few resources this approach is more challenging. Some authorities have multi-disciplinary approach to managing land and property assets which has led to a broader understanding of the regenerative benefits of quality places (eg Southampton and Eastleigh). Southampton has also carried out surveys of the impact of public realm investment on inward investment (resulting in a 1:5 cost/benefit ratio) to demonstrate to Members the value and regenerative impact this sort of investment can have.

3. Place making and quality design policies which underpin Development Plan Documents, including detailed guidance on creating high quality development where necessary.

All authorities have specific design policies and most have design SPG/SPD, a few extending to public realm. Hampshire has adopted their own companion guide to the Manual for Streets. A good number of authorities have used or intend to use the Quality Places template in updating design SPD. Most authorities are using master plans and development briefs. A few authorities use Village Design Statements or Local Area Design Statements, Character Appraisals (Conservation and other areas) and Landscape Character Assessments. A few have/are using design codes on specific sites. One authority uses Local Distinctiveness Guidance to great effect (eg New Forest). Resourcing of the preparation of new SPD/guidance is under pressure in most authorities. Town Centre Visions, Master Plans and Action Plans are also used where a wider approach is necessary, and as a means of identifying specific packages of work for funding opportunities.

Eastleigh are implementing the BREEAM Community initiative, requiring a score of excellent on developments of over 100 homes.

NPPF has strengthened the policy context for a design led approach. By Design and the Urban Design Compendium still used.

4. Decision making which uses the wider value of creating quality places as a prime consideration rather than cost alone.

Use of design panels by most authorities has helped bring forward better quality schemes, particularly where schemes are reviewed at an early stage. These are being shared between Winchester and Eastleigh. Basingstoke and Rushmoor are using the East Hampshire Architects Review panel. Some panels have been reconstituted as multi disciplinary.

A few authorities are using Building for Life Assessments or variations of, as well as the Code for Sustainable Homes and Lifetime Homes guidance.

Some authorities feel that the Charter in itself has not increased their commitment to design, though it has been a helpful reminder of the importance

of quality places, and importantly now many objectives reinforced by the NPPF. Several said that the NPPF is extremely helpful in design matters and given considerable weight by Inspectors, however the emphasis on growth had in some planning applications undermined the quality of design.

Post occupancy surveys are generally not undertaken.

5. Opportunities to improve the quality and management of existing places.

All authorities have been carrying out public realm or environmental improvement schemes. Recently pressure on budgets has affected some authorities more than others, some only able to achieve improvements through planning applications, others specifically prioritising key areas for attention.

Town Centre Visions, Master Plans and Action Plans are also used where a wider approach is necessary, and have been successful as a means of identifying specific packages of work for funding opportunities. Development Briefs and Design Codes are used proactively on some sites (on large housing sites) to guide the design of future development.

Outsourcing of highway engineers has had some effect on ability to work multi-disciplinarily but that has had negative as well as positive impacts (ie brought more resource to bolster internal resources). Applications for large housing schemes and extensions have put large demands on in-house staff stretching resources considerably. Consultants have been commissioned in some instances to prepare frameworks for larger development areas.

6. Appropriate place awareness and design training for leaders, councillors and officers.

Some member/officer training is carried out using site specific schemes on a regular basis but this approach is sporadic due to the cost and time in setting up and running them. Some authorities run reviews of built schemes as a learning exercise. A few authorities are not undertaking training currently due to financial pressures.

A few authorities have design awards. Some authorities have put forward schemes for the biennial Solent Design Awards. Some amenity societies have their own awards.

7. Community involvement in the planning, design and management of places.

All authorities involve communities through public consultation or specific area design guidance and encourage this on major developments. Enquiry by Design approach has been used by Rushmoor. Winchester is using design codes on sites with high public interest and interest groups help drive forward high quality design.

A few Neighbourhood Plans are at inception stage though communities appear to be over whelmed by the work involved; the use of Local Distinctiveness Guidance in the New Forest has meant that the community feel that Neighbourhood Plans are not needed.

Hampshire has adopted guidance to help communities assess and maintain local distinctiveness.
