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THE FUNDAMENTALS

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When the Urban Design Compendium was first published in 2000 it noted that quality of design was becoming one of the most important criteria in determining whether a project should be eligible for public funding. Since this time understanding of the importance of design quality in creating places people want to live and work in has grown. All development proposals – whether for new development or redevelopment of small infill sites – need to demonstrate that they will be delivering quality places.

It is therefore vital that those evaluating the quality of design proposals have some guidance on what forms of urban design work well and why. Similarly those developing proposals need information on what will be expected of them in terms of their investment in project design.

The purpose of the Urban Design Compendium is to help equip all those involved in the delivery of places with guidance on achieving and assessing the quality of urban design in developing and restoring urban areas.

It is not an exhaustive text. The Compendium provides an analysis of core design issues through the different stages of the project process, from assessment of overall context to deciding the detail of proposed developments. It is principally about the substance of urban design in creating the product. In other words, how do we change the urban landscape to create places where people want to live, work and socialise, from the street corner to the brand new settlement. The Compendium is not generally intended as a guide on how design relates to the detail of the planning and management process. However, we address these issues in the new companion publication ‘Urban Design Compendium 2: Delivering Quality Places’.

The material within the Compendium reflects good practice both in the UK and overseas, relying on the stream of new and rediscovered approaches to urban design that emerged at the end of the twentieth century. The regeneration movement has been at the forefront of producing this new wave of thinking about how design can position development in the market, change perceptions of place and create value. There is also a strong body of research to be drawn upon what constitutes urban quality.



Greenwich Millennium Village is already demonstrating new forms of city living

The Compendium was developed following the work of the Urban Task Force, which was established by the Government to consider how we can use a projected 20% increase in the number of households in England over the next 20 years as a basis for regenerating our towns and cities. In its 1999 final report: *Towards an Urban Renaissance* – the task force called for design-led regeneration. This led to wider support for improving design quality, particularly through the planning process.

The Compendium was developed to complement the DETR/ Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment design guide *'By Design: Urban Design in the Planning System: Towards better practice*. This document was published to promote higher standards in urban design and provide sound, practical advice to help implement the Government's commitment to good design, as set out in Planning Policy Guidance Note 3: Housing (2000).

In the years since these documents were published there has been increasing government commitment to the improvement of design quality. Planning Policy Statement 1 (2005) clearly states that 'high quality and inclusive design should be the aim of all those involved in the development process'.

Despite this growing understanding of the importance of good urban design CABE's housing audit have highlighted there are few high quality schemes actually being delivered on the ground. This edition of the Compendium is therefore accompanied by *Urban Design Compendium 2: Delivering Quality Places*, which provides detailed guidance on how to overcome key barriers in the design process which currently impede delivery of quality places.

Why English Partnerships and the Housing Corporation?

For over a decade English Partnerships and the Housing Corporation have led the way on behalf of the public sector in promoting innovation in the design of projects they are involved in.

English Partnerships has always emphasised the importance of design and quality and has put the latest thinking into practice in its projects and those of its partners. It has pioneered new techniques such as Enquiry by Design and Design Coding on its projects and promoted innovation through competitions such as Design for Manufacture and the Carbon Challenge. It was also the first body to set compliance with Building for Life assessment criteria as a standard requirement on all projects. This emphasis on design has resulted in projects of exceptional design quality being delivered.



The Guinness Trust and Knightstone Housing Association have combined in Frome, Somerset, to create 'The Piggeries' – a mix of high density housing that responds sensitively to local context

Good design is one of the key elements which help the Housing Corporation achieve their aim to invest in homes that create sustainable environments. This means creating areas that are desirable, healthy, safe and better places for people of all ages to live and flourish. The Corporation understands that good design can create attractive sustainable communities for residents and justify their sense of pride in their environment.

Over the past decade the Housing Corporation have used both their Scheme Development Standards and competitive bidding process to improve standards and the quality of design. In addition the Corporation and the Local Government Association have agreed a national protocol which sets out how they will work together in ensuring that high quality affordable housing is built and managed.

The bringing together of the Housing Corporation, English Partnerships and significant parts of Communities and Local Government into a single agency will provide a one-stop shop for local authorities and their partners. With a substantial budget for housing and regeneration activities this agency will have significantly greater critical mass than any of the existing organisations acting on their own. Innovation in design will remain a fundamental tenet of the new agency in maximising the delivery of regeneration and new homes.

Who should use the Compendium?

The Compendium was developed to guide policy development and practical application in new development and regeneration for both English Partnerships and the Housing Corporation. It was also hoped to have wider relevance so it would inform and assist all those involved in new development and regeneration and contribute to the improvement of housing-led regeneration projects and the promotion of sustainable new development.

Since publication over 25,000 copies of the compendium have been distributed worldwide and it has become a standard text for those studying urban design worldwide. It is also being translated into Chinese, Korean and Serbian with interest from several other countries.

The principles in the Compendium remain constant and we hope they continue to inform and assist those involved in creating and delivering places.

For those requiring further guidance on the practical delivery of quality places the Compendium should be read in conjunction with 'Urban Design Compendium 2: Delivering Quality Places'.



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Urban design draws together the many strands of place-making - environmental responsibility, social equity and economic viability, for example - into the creation of places of beauty and distinct identity. Urban design is derived from but transcends related matters such as planning and transportation policy, architectural design, development economics, landscape and engineering. It draws these and other strands together. In summary, urban design is about creating a vision for an area and then deploying the skills and resources to realise that vision.

Since the Second World War, this country has seen very extensive urban development and renewal. While there are exceptions, a great deal of this development has been third-rate and is lacking in any 'sense of place'. At worst, the results have been downright ugly and unpleasant. Fine urban fabrics have been spoilt through the process of re-development. The remarkable built heritage flowing from the English urban tradition has yielded to banal and monotonous development, humdrum in design and dominated by traffic. We have repeated standard housing types and layouts, retail boxes and road layouts so many times, with little or no regard for local context, until we find that now almost everywhere looks like everywhere else.

Unblocking the blockages

The development process, and the players within that process - central and local government, politicians and professionals, developers, financiers and builders - have become entangled in a system which produces developments, but not places. We hope that this Compendium will fulfil a useful role in redirecting efforts, to create a framework for development as a contributor to the creation of quality places. There is a growing commitment on the part of funding agencies, as well as planning law and guidance, to underpin this effort to ensure that developments will not be considered acceptable unless they address the issue of place and do it well. To make quality places the norm rather than the exception means overcoming a whole series of constraints, including :

- The compartmentalisation of professional disciplines - the traffic engineer, chartered surveyor, architect, landscape architect, planner - rather than adopting a multi-disciplinary approach.
- The lack of recognition of the legitimate role of the public sector to promote high quality design through planning, site assembly, procurement and investment.
- The predominantly conservative, short term and supply-driven characteristics of the development industry - particularly the volume housebuilders, who concentrate on the 'house' product rather than the creation of a 'place', lifestyle or community.
- The property and financial industries' preference for single use schemes and buildings.
- A lack of innovation in development approaches in respect of sustainable development, use of new technology, construction efficiencies, and planning and design appropriate for the 21st century.



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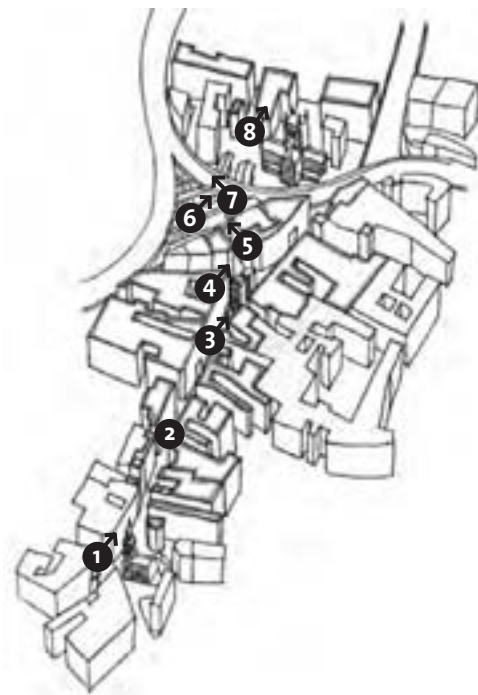
- Reactive planning and development control approaches and mind-sets, applying quantitative standards (zoning, density, car parking, privacy distances etc.) rather than providing qualitative advice and judgements.
- The lack of a reliable, robust and generally adopted series of guidelines and procedures through which high quality design can be procured.

Everyone owns Design

Design is not just for designers and their acolytes. Urban design, like all design, should involve a dialogue with the customer, whether the existing people within an area or those likely to move in. It is a process that needs to generate and draw upon consumer interest. The users hold the knowledge of how an existing area works, its needs and possibilities. Collaborative planning and design processes and a shared understanding of the issues ensure attention to local concerns and reduce possible antagonism from local communities to change.

Local communities can also have a role in implementing projects and managing aftercare. Involvement and commitment can be harnessed on these fronts through early involvement in the design process.

The commitment to dialogue extends, of course, to the professional interests. Urban design is not the province of one professional group; it should involve joint working between different stakeholders representing different interests. This means that a full range of professional skills needs to be involved at each stage of the design process, with the team members testing and challenging each other, coming under continual scrutiny from an informed client, and thus, through joint working, producing a single cohesive product to which all are committed.



By analysing existing places and the complex relationships between their constituent parts we can learn to recognise and create the qualities of a rich and stimulating urban environment

Set out below is a summary of some key aspects of urban design which run throughout this Compendium. These have been developed with specific reference to regeneration and development issues and provide a basis for starting to think about a site or area - whether an empty brownfield or greenfield site, or for the refurbishment of an existing urban area. As such they differ in emphasis although not in broad policy direction, from design principles or objectives published in other design documents.

Table 1.1 – Key Aspects of Urban Design

Places for People

For places to be well-used and well-loved, they must be safe, comfortable, varied and attractive. They also need to be distinctive, and offer variety, choice and fun. Vibrant places offer opportunities for meeting people, playing in the street and watching the world go by.

Enrich the Existing

New development should enrich the qualities of existing urban places. This means encouraging a distinctive response that arises from and complements its setting. This applies at every scale - the region, the city, the town, the neighbourhood, and the street.

Make Connections

Places need to be easy to get to and be integrated physically and visually with their surroundings. This requires attention to how to get around by foot, bicycle, public transport and the car - and in that order.

Work with the Landscape

Places that strike a balance between the natural and man made environment and utilise each site's intrinsic resources - the climate, landform, landscape and ecology - to maximise energy conservation and amenity.

Mix Uses and Forms

Stimulating, enjoyable and convenient places meet a variety of demands from the widest possible range of users, amenities and social groups. They also weave together different building forms, uses, tenures and densities.

Manage the Investment

For projects to be developable and well cared for they must be economically viable, well managed and maintained. This means understanding the market considerations of developers, ensuring long term commitment from the community and the local authority, defining appropriate delivery mechanisms and seeing this as part of the design process.

Design for Change

New development needs to be flexible enough to respond to future changes in use, lifestyle and demography. This means designing for energy and resource efficiency; creating flexibility in the use of property, public spaces and the service infrastructure and introducing new approaches to transportation, traffic management and parking.

The table below sets out how these key aspects of urban design relate to the principles and objectives in key design documents

UDC1 Key aspects of urban design	By Design Principles of urban design	Princes Foundation Design and theory principles	Responsive Environments	PPS1 Principles of good design
Places for people	Quality of the public realm	Make Places	Robustness	create an environment where everyone can access and benefit from the full range of opportunities available to members of society
	Continuity and Enclosure			
Enrich the existing	Character	Build beautifully	Visual appropriateness	be integrated into the existing urban form and the natural and built environments
			Richness	
Make connections	Ease of Movement	Allow movement logically and legibly	Permeability	be integrated into the existing urban form and the natural and built environments
	Legibility		Legibility	address the connections between people and places by considering the needs of people to access jobs and key services
Work with the landscape		Design using natural harmonics		consider the direct and indirect impacts on the natural environment.
Mix uses and form	Diversity	Engender social interaction	Variety	address the connections between people and places by considering the needs of people to access jobs and key services
Manage the investment		Sustain land value		
Design for change	Adaptability		Personalisation	create an environment where everyone can access and benefit from the full range of opportunities available to members of society

The following chapters interpret these principles for each stage of project development.

Appreciating the context

How urban design thinking interprets and builds upon historic character, natural resources and the aspirations of local communities, and arrives at a realistic vision of what a place might become.

Creating the urban structure

Working out the inter-relationship between development blocks, streets, buildings, open space, landscape and all the other features that make up urban areas.

Making the connections

Achieving sustainable movement systems – the roads, streets, footpaths, public transport routes, green corridors, and systems for providing service utilities, all of which improve urban life.

Detailing the place

Considering the detail of buildings and the public realm, and the crucial interface between them - the corner treatments, the roof-lines, the pavement, the street lighting etc.

Implementation and delivery

Managing the design process to ensure that a commitment to quality continues beyond completion of construction.

The Structure of the Compendium**The scope of the Compendium**

The Compendium has been designed to assist at three levels of project development :

1 Commissioning and setting up development projects

Ensuring that this complex process is done in a way that ensures that design is integrated throughout the evolution of a project. Therefore, at the very early stages of a project, the Compendium insists that urban design issues are considered, whether in respect of the economic appraisal, the preparation of an environmental statement, the development of a community participation strategy or other tasks.

2 Designing individual schemes

Within an overall development framework, the Compendium provides advice that will be useful in designing individual development schemes, from an entire block to an individual plot. For example, the guidance can be used to help construct individual site development briefs.

3 Evaluating project proposals in design terms

From major area regeneration schemes or town extensions to small applications for gap funding, individual buildings or spaces, the Compendium can provide the evaluating team with the triggers it requires to ensure a comprehensive assessment of a project's design potential and it can point funding bodies in the right direction. However it is not a substitute for project specific specialist advice.

The structure of the Compendium

The Compendium follows the chronology of the project development process (see left).

At times important advice is repeated but we make no apology for this. For example, issues that are crucial to making the right connections may also be essential to the pattern of the overall structure. To help the reader in making the right judgements as to what is relevant and what is not, and to assist the many readers who will want to 'dip into' the Compendium, rather than read it cover to cover, there are frequent cross-references.

The value of guidance

Taken together, guidance contained within the Compendium relating to both the 'product' and 'process' of urban design provides a comprehensive overview. Yet this is not a tick-box exercise. A note of caution is required. In design guidance, as in other fields, there is a sort of inverse utility rule; the value of new measures diminishing as a function of time. The more they are institutionalised, the less their utility. A classic case is the original Essex Design Guide - a first class piece of work in its time - rapidly adopted by planning departments and then by the development industry. This led to permissions being won on a 'deemed to comply' basis, almost regardless of the actual design quality. They learnt the tune but ignored the music!

For every piece of general guidance produced, there is an excellent place that defies the guidance, or shows other ways of achieving high quality solutions. Genius, or indeed serendipity, breaks the rules.

Important to the spirit of the Compendium is its encouragement of clients and their designers to aspire to the creation of high quality places. Our overall messages are that there is a need for everyone to contribute to a new culture of high quality urban design and that there is no substitute for a good design team.

How to use the Compendium

The Compendium has been constructed in such a way that it can be read as a single coherent narrative, tracing the design of a project from first principles to specific features, but at the same time it can be dipped into on a topic-by-topic basis. There is no prescription in the Compendium but neither does it shirk from giving quantitative advice where this is deemed helpful. Thus, throughout the report, there are many rules-of-thumb and guideline values that should be considered in drawing up design proposals.

Different parts of the Compendium will be relevant to different types of project. In respect of significant area regeneration schemes, town extensions or new settlements, most of the material contained in the Compendium will be relevant. For smaller infill schemes, it will be a case of extracting those items that are relevant in any given case. What is important is that funding applicants do not sell themselves short. Even the simplest infill scheme must, for example, have due respect for its site context and its overall contribution to the neighbouring urban structure.

The Compendium contains a series of tables and checklists. These are intended for practical use, to be employed in real project scenarios by project promoters and evaluators, in testing the robustness of the design approach. In the final chapter there is a particularly important flow diagram that presents all the core elements of the urban design process. All significant area regeneration projects should pass through each of these processes. Smaller projects will need to employ some but not all of the stages.



The Compendium also provides case studies to illustrate different approaches and points of principle. Each case study has contact details so that relevant projects can be followed up.

How does it fit with Urban Design Compendium 2: Delivering Quality Places

If Urban Design is ‘the art of shaping the interaction between, people and places, environment and urban form, nature and built fabric, and influencing the processes which lead to successful villages, towns and cities’ (Campbell and Cowan, 1999) this Compendium deals with the former aspects and the second Compendium addresses the processes which lead to successful villages, towns and cities. Urban Design Compendium 2: Delivering Quality Places therefore builds on the principles of this Compendium to provide guidance on how these principles can be effectively delivered in practice.

To do this the second Compendium considers the different processes that impact on project delivery; policy, design, investment and development economics, planning and technical approvals and governance, management and maintenance. It provides guidance on what needs to be done at each stage to ensure delivery of places which prove to be high quality in the long term.

As with this document the second compendium draws on the experiences of those who have been involved in project delivery, from both English Partnerships and Housing Corporation experiences and beyond. It is hoped that this guidance on why particular aspects of projects have been successful will provide an effective resource for all those involved in delivering new developments and regenerating existing areas.

The first edition of this Compendium noted that it was prepared against a shifting and evolving backcloth. In the seven years since it was published there have certainly been significant changes in public policy, technological development and environmental thinking which have significant implications for urban design. The second compendium looks to address some of these in more detail, particularly with regard to environmental issues and long term management of places.

UDC website – www.urbandesigncompendium.co.uk



The Compendium does not purport to be the final word on best practice in urban design. Further information on urban design principles and case studies can be obtained from organisations such as Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment (CABE), the British Urban Regeneration Association, the Urban Design Group, the Civic Trust and the Resource for Urban Design Information (RUDI) website (<http://rudi.herts.ac.uk>).

As a best practice guide such as this derives its value from the projects and partnerships it forms and stimulates. English Partnerships and the Housing Corporation want the Compendium to continue to be used but we also desire feedback from the experience of its use. What needs to be changed? What is missing? What should not be there? What is difficult to understand? What is difficult to implement?

We will learn from this feedback and use it to develop both the web based guidance and our other best practice documents. We will also look to implement any suggestions for better, more effective ways of working in our future projects.

All feedback should be sent to the following address:

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