

## Placemaking & Communities

### Design Quality - Our Considerations

#### 1. Issues and opportunities

- 1.1. The importance of new development achieving good design is well established in the planning system. The importance of good design is also recognised by the Metro Mayor, and has been reflected in a number of development projects in the Liverpool City Region that have won design awards, which include:
- Everyman Theatre – RIBA Stirling Prize winner.
  - Alder Hey Children's Hospital - RIBA North West Award 2019.
  - Liverpool's Royal Court - RIBA North West Award 2018, RIBA North West Conservation Award 2018 and RIBA National Award 2018.
  - Farnworth House – RIBA North West Award 2019.
  - Royal Liverpool Philharmonic - RIBA North West Award 2017 and RIBA National Award 2017.
- 1.2. The important role the planning system has in achieving high design standards is becoming increasingly recognised. The [Building Better, Building Beautiful](#) Commission set out that beauty must become the natural result of working within the planning system, which to achieve requires three aims; ask for beauty, refuse ugliness, and promote stewardship. The Commission advocate an integrated approach in which placemaking is considered from the outset and subjected to a democratic or co-design process. Values that matter to people - beauty, community, history, landscape being safe guarded, places, not units; high streets, not glass bottles; local design codes, not faceless architecture that could be anywhere, illustrate the Commission's perspective on design in the planning system.
- 1.3. The Combined Authority are keen to ensure that development within the City Region is designed to the highest standards, to achieve beautiful, safe, and sustainable buildings and places that enable healthier and happier lives.

## 2. Why does the Spatial Development Strategy need to address this?

- 2.1. [The National Planning Policy Framework](#) sets out that high quality places and buildings are fundamental to what the planning and development process should achieve. It also sets out that good design is a key aspect of sustainable development, that creates better places in which to live and work and helps make development acceptable to communities.
- 2.2. [National Planning Practice Guidance](#) identifies that strategic policies can be used to set key design requirements for strategic site allocations to explain how future master planning and design work is expected to be taken forward for these sites.
- 2.3. [The National Design Guide](#) establishes 10 characteristics of well-designed places, which comprise; context, identity, built form, movement, nature, public spaces, uses, homes and buildings, resources and lifespan. The guide notes that well-designed places work to create physical character, a sense of community and positively address climate change.
- 2.4. In addition, the Government's planning system reform white paper [Planning for the Future](#) has a strong focus on design, and highlights the importance of preparing local design guides and codes and pattern books. This autumn, the Government intends to publish a National Model Design Code setting out more detailed parameters for development in different types of locations, alongside a revised version of the 'Manual for Streets'.

## 3. What is being done by the Combined Authority?

- 3.1. Of relevance to design quality, the Metro Mayor in his Manifesto sets out he will:
  - Promote good design and supporting concerted action to improve the quality and attractiveness of neighbourhoods across the City Region.
  - Appoint a Liverpool City Region design champion to promote good design (Paul Monaghan has since been appointed).

3.2. The Combined Authority are keen to ensure that development within the City Region is designed to the highest standards, to achieve beautiful, safe, and sustainable buildings and places that enable healthier and happier lives. In February 2020, the Combined Authority in association with the Liverpool City Region Design Champion and RIBA North West held a 'Forgotten Spaces' competition. Further details on this initiative can be found [here](#) and [here](#).

#### 4. What you told us

4.1. Here is a summary of what you told us during our 12 week engagement last year in relation to design:

- Promote sustainable inclusive design and layouts that reflects a visionary design code.
- Introduce mandatory design and energy efficiency standards.
- Appoint a design champion for the LCR.
- Ensure that the density, design and materials will be appropriate and enhances its context.
- Have better designed buildings and places.
- Involve the community and architects in the design process.

#### 5. How we could respond?

5.1. We consider that the SDS should have a positive role in setting out how development will achieve beauty that respects the City Region's unique characteristics, is future ready, safe, sustainable, and enables healthier and happier lives. In this light, we have listed a number of recognised design tools. An SDS design policy would need to be mindful of the planning system reform white paper which indicates that good design can be achieved by tools such as design guides, codes and pattern books, and envisages a move towards a map and rule based approach as opposed to vague statements of policy. We await the outcome of the Planning White Paper. In the meantime, we are keen to establish which

design tools would be most appropriate for securing good design; below is a list of planning tools that could be potentially utilised.

<p>Independent Design Review Panels (for example, Design Council/Places Matter/ a dedicated LCR panel).</p> <p>The Design Council have produced further details and guidance on design reviews which can be found <a href="#">here</a>.</p>
<p>A City Region Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) on design.</p> <p>SPDs provide more detailed guidance that accompany development plan policies. Further details on SPDs can be found in the <a href="#">Planning Practice Guidance</a>.</p>
<p>Masterplans.</p> <p>The <a href="#">Building Better, Building Beautiful Commission</a> definition states that ‘a masterplan sets out proposals for blocks, buildings, spaces, street hierarchy, movement strategy green infrastructure and land use in three dimensions and matches these proposals to a delivery strategy.’</p>
<p>Design Codes.</p> <p>A Design Code is defined by the NPPF as ‘a set of illustrated design requirements that provide specific, detailed parameters for the physical development of a site or area. The graphic and written components of the code should build upon a design vision, such as a masterplan or other design and development framework for a site or area.’</p>
<p>Context (or site and area) appraisal.</p> <p>Defined by the <a href="#">Design Council</a> as ‘a detailed analysis of the features of a site or area (including land uses, built and natural environment, and social and physical characteristics) which serves as the basis for an urban design framework, development brief, design guide, or other policy or guidance.’ <a href="#">Design and Access Statements</a> incorporate a form of context appraisal and are required for certain types of planning applications. The SDS could be informed by or require detailed context appraisals for certain sites and areas in the City Region.</p>

Design competitions (for example, RIBA design competition e.g. University of Liverpool School of Architecture).
Design Awards (for example, RIBA NW awards, LCR specific awards and Stirling Prize).
Dedicated Design Officers to advise/support Local Authorities.
Any others, please specify.

5.2. Sustainable design was a common suggestion from the previous engagement. We will be considering how we can achieve energy efficiency standards for non-residential development when the Government further details its Planning White Paper proposals. Our suggested approach to housing standards is set out elsewhere in this engagement.

## 6. Which Objectives will this approach help to achieve?

6.1. The suggested policy approach will help support the following SDS objectives:



Creating high quality buildings and places that allow our communities to flourish



Addressing health inequalities and creating a healthier City Region



Tackling Climate Change and creating a greener City Region



Delivering an Inclusive Economy



Embedding Social Value in all aspects of development

## 7. How can we make sure this approach would work?

- 7.1. Depending on which design tool is chosen as part of the suggested policy approach, we could measure whether the development constructed accords with the relevant requirements, and review whether the development post-completion achieved good design.