

**Report Title:** Draft Kirkwall Urban Design Development Framework (KUDDF)  
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**Client/Developer:** Orkney Islands Council  
**Lead Designer:**  
**Local Authority:** Orkney Islands Council  
**Location:** Kirkwall, Orkney  
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**PDF:**



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## Introduction

This report relates to the final draft of the Kirkwall Urban Design Development Framework (KUDDF). The draft KUDDF was presented as part of a consultation process at an A+DS Design Review meeting held on 14 October in Edinburgh.

The project was presented by Orkney Islands Council.

## A+DS Views

### 1 General

1.1 We commend the Council for commissioning a Strategic Urban Design Framework for Kirkwall, with a view to informing the new Local Plan, and for the clear way in which it was presented to us. We are pleased to hear that the involvement of an A+DS Enabler on this project has been of help to Orkney Islands Council, encouraging an aspirational approach and supporting them in the development of the KUDDF.

1.2 The approach being taken is of interest to us both because it could provide a valuable tool to help guide the future development of Kirkwall in an integrated and visionary manner, and because it could provide a precedent for the way in which Local Plans might be developed in other areas, both within Orkney and nationally. We offer the following observations and recommendations within this context.

### 2 Analysis and vision

2.1 We rarely see Local Plans emerging out of a strategic vision for a place, and, as stated above, we support and applaud the Council's aspirations in this respect. However, we feel that the vision currently presented does not yet fully address Kirkwall's potential as a unique place in a distinctive landscape setting, and suggest that it could be strengthened through a more in depth analysis of the both the town and its context.

2.2 At present the area covered by the KUDDF is limited to the town itself. However, due to Kirkwall's size and its close relationship with the surrounding area we suggest that the Framework should be extended to embrace its wider context, in particular Scapa Bay. Such an approach would encourage a more informed response to the unique characteristics of the area in a way that is not apparent at present.

2.3 The area around Kirkwall Bay and the Peedie Sea serves as a strategic gateway on the approach to the town from the north-west, and is seen as an area that requires major change. We recognise that the area provides a natural site for commercial extension to the town for which the Council has high aspirations. Careful consideration should be given to the planning of its development to ensure that high quality places and buildings are realised. We suggest that a more prescriptive approach as to how the area might be developed is required if the Council's aspirations are to be realised.

2.4 The KUDDF should encourage the preparation of development briefs for sites where development is anticipated. These briefs should be quite specific in responding to the

principles contained within the Framework and in identifying the qualities of the site and its surroundings.

### **3 New school and hospital**

3.1 The proposed construction of a new community school is an enormous opportunity for Orkney, and represents potential social and economic benefits for the town.

3.2 We are encouraged by the approach that is being taken in developing the Framework, whereby high design quality is aspired to, and the site identified for the new school is shown as being inextricably linked to a green network. Careful consideration needs to be given to the way in which the school buildings are located on the site, to ensure that they are well integrated into the urban structure of the town and its green networks.

3.3 It is important that the various stakeholders involved in the development of the school work together throughout its design and implementation to ensure that the vision outlined in the Framework can be delivered and is not diluted.

3.4 We note that there are plans to develop a new hospital within the Framework area. Again, we encourage all stakeholders to work together to ensure that an appropriate location is identified and a high quality building delivered which makes a positive contribution to the town.

### **4 Process and implementation**

4.1 The success of the KUDDF will be dependent on both the quality of the vision and the measures put in place to maintain it. The Council's willingness to adopt the Framework as supplementary planning guidance will be critical, as will be its role in championing and, in key areas, delivering, that vision.

4.2 The Council is a major developer in Kirkwall. The key stakeholders within the Council, and other public sector bodies responsible for development within the town, need to work together to ensure that the vision is demonstrated and delivered, quality maintained and attractive and successful places created throughout the town. We encourage the early implementation of critical infrastructure and public realm projects, such as the route from the ferry terminal to the town centre, to demonstrate and help set in motion other initiatives.

### **Conclusion**

We are very supportive of the exemplary approach being taken by Orkney Islands Council Planning Department in developing an urban design framework for the town of Kirkwall prior to the preparation of the Local Plan, and are pleased that A+DS has been helpful through its enabling programme. We commend them for the thoroughness of the KUDDF thus far. As the Framework is developed we would like to see the vision that underlies it becoming both more ambitious and specific. In doing so we encourage an approach that is more exploitative of the unique qualities of the existing town and more driven by a landscape strategy than is currently the case. If the Council's high aspirations for the future of Kirkwall are to be realised it is critical that key stakeholders within the Council and other public sector bodies buy in to and champion the vision contained within the KUDDF and commit to its implementation.

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