

Local Authority Urban Design Forum

MEETING 7: CHAIRED BY LAURA ROBERTSON (ABERDEEN CITY COUNCIL), FRANCIS NEWTON (CITY OF EDINBURGH COUNCIL)

12 May 2016 | Lighthouse, Glasgow



LAUDF 07 workshop, Lighthouse, Glasgow

Introduction

The LAUDF is a network for local authority practitioners with an involvement in urban design to share ideas on current issues, learn from each other's experience and build up resources that everyone can benefit from.

This newsletter covers the seventh meeting of the Forum, which focussed on the topic of Street Design. The meeting was attended by 50 professionals from 24 local authorities or public bodies. The meeting attracted a good mix of people across planning, transport, architecture, urban design and landscape professions.

Presentations from the Scottish Government, the Society of Chief Officers of Transportation (SCOTS), City of Edinburgh Council and Architecture and Design Scotland offered different perspectives on street design and set the context for workshop discussions.

Two key workshops looked at street design for the retrofit or adaptation of existing streets and the design of new streets.

Forum members proposed projects from their own areas to prompt discussion around key issues.

Placemaking Perspective

Stuart Watson offered a placemaking perspective on street design on behalf of the Scottish Government's Architecture and Place Division. Stuart lead on the development of the Designing Streets toolbox, which hosts a range of policy, guidance and practical tools to assist practitioners in the application of designing streets principles.

Stuart referred to government policies promoting quality street design, highlighting references in SPP to using a design led approach, and to Creating Places and the six qualities of place. The need for collaboration and risk sharing was noted for successful street design, particularly in design of complex areas. The benefits of such an approach were highlighted "when streets are designed for people, not cars 25% more people walk".

"It's not about ways to get there it's about places to go!". Creating successful places that will endure is vital. The importance of diagnosis before treatment was noted, with Geddes (survey – analysis – plan) and Jan Gehl (life – space – buildings) cited. The important work being done by local authorities to translate national policy to a local level was welcomed. The potential of the place standard was highlighted as a means of gathering information about how people feel about their streets.

<http://www.creatingplacescotland.org>



Practitioner Perspective: Waverley Bridge, Edinburgh



Role of Architecture: Scotland's Housing Expo, Inverness

SCOTS Perspective

John Thomson offered perspectives on street design on behalf of the Society of Chief Officers of Transportation in Scotland (SCOTS). John explained his role with SCOTS, considering global and national issues and outlined the collaborative work done to launch the National Roads Development Guide in 2014.

The guide now reflects Designing Streets principles, introduces the Quality Audit technique (used in Designing places) and practically enables alignment of Roads Construction Consent and the planning process - extending the process through adoption to ongoing governance.

John noted that the UK are knowledge and process leaders internationally. Koge in Denmark and Etten-Leur in the Netherlands were highlighted as international examples of good practice in line with designing streets principles.

Koge demonstrated a close public/private collaborative approach to delivery of a major urban extension, while in Etten-Leur integrated car parking had been used as a driver to maximise land value. More details including papers and international best practice examples could be found here: <http://www.ifmeworld.org>

Stuart and John later highlighted important ongoing work looking at the alignment of consent processes across local authority transport and planning teams.

Forum members were also made aware of the proposal for a Street Design Academy – an accredited training course offering collaborative learning for development and local authority professionals to gain consistent understanding of National Roads Guidance.

The course would be predominantly flexible learning, with teaching provided by Strathclyde University. A funding bid has been submitted to CITB.

Practitioner Perspective

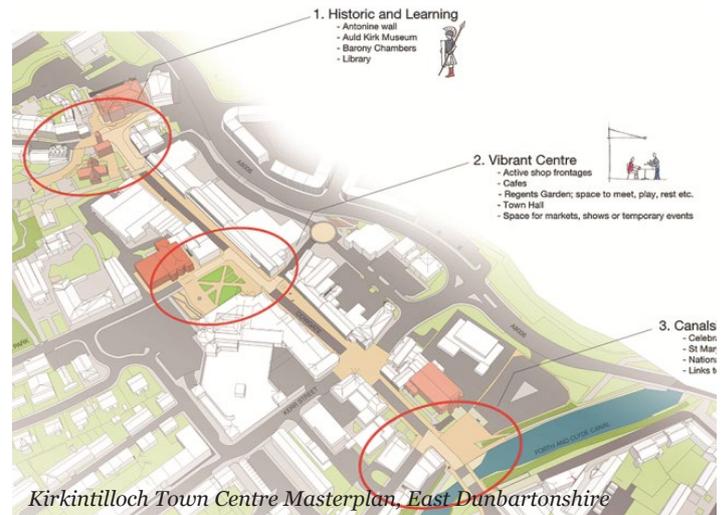
Karen Stevenson, City of Edinburgh Council, gave a practitioners perspective of developing and implementing local street design guidance. **Edinburgh's Street Design Guidance**, published in October 2015, sets out the Council's expectations and specific advice for different types of Edinburgh streets.

Key commitments in the guidance include: a design process that starts by considering the street as a place for people, integrated design solutions reflecting the character of the area, prioritising the pedestrian experience - followed by cyclists and public transport users, and reducing street clutter. The guidance also promotes collaborative working between different disciplines. Karen highlighted recent projects in the city which have implemented principles of the guidance, including public realm improvements at Waverley Bridge.

Designing Streets: Role of the Architecture

Johnny Cadell, Architecture & Design Scotland, presented on the role that architecture can play in street design. Johnny touched on key areas where architecture can contribute to the creation of successful streets including: Helping to put place before movement, the creation of defensible spaces and transitional spaces, creating enclosure, the role of density in making composed streetscapes, integrated parking solutions, mixed and adaptable uses, treatment of greenspace and public realm and creating a sense of place through appropriate use of specific forms eg terraces and clusters.

More resources and information on A&DS' advice services available here: <http://www.ads.org.uk/>



Workshop 1: Existing Streets

Forum members from Glasgow City Council, City of Edinburgh Council, Dumfries and Galloway Council, East Dunbartonshire, West Dunbartonshire and Fife Council provided projects or proposals to prompt discussion around key issues to do with the adaptation or retrofitting of existing streets.

In small discussion groups, participants considered key challenges and learning points for each project, before moving onto a broader discussion to pull in learning from their own experiences of dealing with design issues for existing streets. Wide ranging discussions touched on:

- Getting a balanced approach to the delivery of shared space
- Importance of collaborative working to deliver desired outcomes
- Dealing with conservative attitudes and conflict – within community and across departmental teams
- Addressing issues of wider connectivity
- Retrofitting of linear routes well understood, but effective treatment of junctions more tricky
- Importance of engaging communities in the right way, at the right time and with the right questions and factoring in the voices of the silent majority
- Dealing with historic rural settings – tight carriageways, reducing traffic speed through village centres, improving pedestrian experience
- Approaches to incentivise changes to driver behaviour – removing white lines, surface treatments, raising carriageway to pavement level
- Where funding is an issue, the potential for a long term plan coupled with incremental application over time.
- Getting pedestrian permeability over major carriageways
- Re-establishing major roads as streets, places to visit, attracting investment
- Negotiating for servicing of businesses and relocation of parking provision,
- Installation of roundabout / lights compromising pedestrian accessibility – Insufficient modelling of outcomes of interventions
- Need for planning and transport to consult more closely and work together to achieve desired outcomes
- Successes in improving town centre junction, footways, street clutter
- Temporary interventions as a means of testing – advantages and disadvantages
- Active engagement with access panels and mobility groups
- Need for ambition, leadership and support (political and corporate)
- Policy hooks can help to make case for more progressive action
- Working with external parties including public transport providers, local businesses, access panels and mobility groups to negotiate shared solutions
- Examples of widening pavements, raising carriageways and changing junction layouts in favour of pedestrians



Workshop 2: New Streets

Forum members from City of Edinburgh Council/Sustrans, Renfrewshire Council, Glasgow City Council, Falkirk Council and Perth and Kinross Council provided projects or proposals to prompt discussion around key issues relating to the design of new streets.

In small discussion groups, participants considered key challenges and learning points for each project, before moving onto a broader discussion to pull in learning from their own experiences of dealing with design issues for new streets. Wide ranging discussions touched on issues including:

- Benefits of a masterplanned approach aligning a number of developers
- Examples showing early application of designing streets, with open space integrated into streetscape. Now a mature, leafy example demonstrating importance of planting and landscaping
- Where sites are peripheral to centres, car-based commuter communities are inevitably created. Entirely residential sites – no mixed use integrated leading to car reliance
- The best street design and connectivity within new sites doesn't compensate for inaccessible or badly connected locations
- Need to factor wider accessibility / connectivity in at the call for sites stage - Example of one local authority using workshops to consider these issues as part of Local Development Plan process
- Ability for planning authorities to steer the 'right development in the right place' compromised where losses happen at appeal on less accessible sites
- Importance of connecting new sites into existing networks
- Need for leadership, vision and support to achieve desired outcomes

- Example where back parking courts had been less successful than later masterplan phases where parking was integrated into streets
- Behaviours around parking suggest keep it as close to the front door as possible
- Damage to soft landscape at street corners
- Importance of development briefs / key development criteria and early dialogue with developers
- Issues with limited connectivity for new communities
- Challenges of integrating new development into existing strategic roads layouts
- Housing fronting onto major roads - embrace the road? Connectivity across?
- Good example from a dense urban setting – however illustrates that you can end up with too much hard surface and not enough greenery
- Using short streets and narrowed / winding routes to limit vision and provide passive traffic calming

And Finally...

The next full meeting of LAUDF is proposed for mid November 2016. The steering group would be pleased to hear from anyone interested in contributing to the development of that meeting. The steering group meet on a quarterly basis. Please contact kate.givan@ads.org.uk for more information, or with future topic suggestions.

Forum members are encouraged to register with the online LAUDF [knowledgehub](#) site, where presentations from this meeting are available. It's your site - use it to contact forum members, start discussions or post information about items of interest to members in between meetings.

The LAUDF is intended for all local authority or public agency staff working on issues relating to urban design. Please do encourage colleagues to attend future events.