



20

ROLE OF ARCHITECTURE AND DESIGN SCOTLAND





SCOTTISH EXECUTIVE
Development Department

Scottish Planning Policy

SPP 20

Role of Architecture and Design Scotland



PLANNING SERIES:

- **Scottish Planning Policies (SPPs)** provide statements of Scottish Executive policy on nationally important land use and other planning matters, supported where appropriate by a locational framework.
- **Circulars**, which also provide statements of Scottish Executive policy, contain guidance on policy implementation through legislative or procedural change.
- **Planning Advice Notes (PANs)** provide advice on good practice and other relevant information.

Statements of Scottish Executive policy contained in SPPs and Circulars may be material considerations to be taken into account in development plan preparation and development control.

Existing National Planning Policy Guidelines (NPPGs) have continued relevance to decision making, until such time as they are replaced by a SPP. The term SPP should be interpreted as including NPPGs.

Statements of Scottish Executive location-specific planning policy, for example the West Edinburgh Planning Framework, have the same status in decision making as SPPs.

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STOP

SUMMARY

Scottish Ministers want Scotland to be one of the best small countries in the world, valued as an outstanding place to visit, work and live. In turning this aspiration into reality a key task is to maintain and enhance the quality of our natural and built heritage. It is equally important that any development, whether new build or refurbished, contributes positively to the quality of our cities, towns and rural areas.

The desire to achieve good architecture and quality environments are at the forefront of the planning and development process. Through better design, a well built environment can be created which future generations will enjoy and appreciate - it can improve the quality of life for everyone.

The Scottish Executive attaches great importance to design and the value of creating quality places for everyone. This has been promoted through a variety of means, most importantly through policy statements such as *A Policy for Architecture and Designing Places*.

To support and reinforce the drive for quality, the new body Architecture and Design Scotland (A&DS) will champion excellence in architecture and the built environment. As well as providing general advice, its responsibilities will encompass:

- support through design review
- enabling and advocacy
- research and communication

In carrying out these responsibilities, A&DS will develop strong links with stakeholders, including local communities, who have an interest in the built environment.

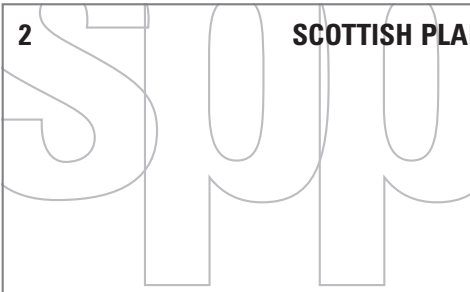


INTRODUCTION

1. In 2000, the then Planning Minister asked “*Where are the conservation areas of the future?*” This question was based on the recognition that although some fine individual buildings have been built in recent years, capable of becoming the listed buildings of tomorrow, few new neighbourhoods of quality were being created. The Executive has promoted a strong and positive design agenda for the built environment to address this concern.
2. The purpose of this Scottish Planning Policy (SPP) is two fold. First, it draws together and reinforces the Executive’s published design policy commitments. Second, it sets out the role of Architecture and Design Scotland (A&DS). A&DS has been set up to deliver the Scottish Ministers’ design and architecture policies. In April 2005, A&DS will take responsibility for design review and become a non-statutory consultee in place of the Royal Fine Art Commission for Scotland (RFACS).
3. This SPP replaces the Scottish Office Development Department Circular No.30/1996 on *Consultation with the Royal Fine Art Commission for Scotland*. It will take effect on 1st April 2005.

QUALITIES OF GOOD DESIGN

4. Poor design leads to impoverishment of the built environment. It has an adverse effect on the quality of life for residents with the erosion of a sense of place, loss of identity and the fragmentation of communities. The long term consequences of poorly designed development are inherently unsustainable. In contrast, good design represents an investment in Scotland’s people and places, and adds value to the built environment.
5. The most successful places are those that flourish socially, environmentally and economically. They also have the following qualities in common:
 - **Distinctiveness** - they have a distinct character and identity
 - **Safe and pleasant** - their public spaces are well looked after
 - **Easy to get to and move around** - they are easy to reach, especially on foot
 - **Welcoming** - their occupants and visitors feel at ease
 - **Adaptable** - they have the capacity to cope with change
 - **Resource efficient** - they promote the sustainable use of resources
6. These six qualities are integral to the Executive’s design related policy documents. Achieving better quality design in the built environment, and in public open spaces, requires design to be given greater importance in the consideration of planning applications. Ultimately, the success of the planning system will be measured by the quality of development on the ground (whether new build or refurbishment) in terms of what it looks like, how it relates to the existing built environment, how well it functions and how long it lasts.



POLICY CONTEXT

7. The current range of design based policy and advice documents, together with work being carried out to address skills, are summarised below:

POLICY

- **A Policy on Architecture (2001)**

8. In *A Policy on Architecture for Scotland*, the Executive recognises that the planning system is one of the most important ways of procuring good architecture. The policy also acknowledges that “*design is a specialist skill but it is not an exclusive activity and depends on a meaningful and sustained dialogue between designers and clients, users and communities*”. This has an important bearing on the way in which the planning system should work to deliver good design. In addition, the policy emphasises the importance of collaborative working to ensure that appropriate professional skills are available in the planning process.

- **Designing Places (2001)**

9. *Designing Places*, the Executive’s planning policy statement on urban design, demonstrates the value of good design, not only in urban areas but also in rural areas. It emphasises the importance of design considerations in reaching planning decisions. *Designing Places* is the starting point for a series of actions and initiatives which support the general thrust of raising design awareness.

- **Scottish Planning Policy (SPP) 1: The Planning System (2002)**

10. SPP 1 sets out the key principles of land use planning in Scotland and reinforces the message that “*design is a material consideration when determining a planning application. A proposal may be refused, and the refusal defended at appeal, solely on design grounds. It is therefore important that planning authorities can draw on expertise with a sound understanding of the principles of design*” (Para 19).

- **Other SPPs**

11. Design issues are taken forward, where relevant, in a number of other planning policy statements, such as SPP 3 *Planning for Housing (2003)*.

ADVICE

12. Linked to *Designing Places*, a new series of design based Planning Advice Notes have been produced to identify and communicate best practice. In the future, further advice notes will be issued to continue to support the Executive’s aspirations for higher design standards.

- **PAN 67 Housing Quality (2003)**

13. PAN 67 provides advice on the layout and design of new housing developments. It was prepared in association with Homes for Scotland, Communities Scotland,

and with advice from a wide range of representatives from local authorities, architects, landscape architects, and transport planners. Its aim is to achieve improved design and quality in new housing developments.

- **PAN 68 Design Statements (2003)**

14. Design statements can be a valuable tool within the planning process. PAN 68 explains the purpose of design statements, the circumstances in which they should accompany planning applications, how they are prepared, and how they should be structured. The aim is to ensure that both applicants and planning authorities are clear about the role of design statements, and how they can have more of a key role within the planning process.
15. Through this SPP the Executive seeks a more consistent approach towards the use of design statements and encourages them to be submitted more routinely as part of the development control process. This will be particularly relevant where development is likely to have a significant impact on the environment.

- **PAN 71 Conservation Area Management (2004)**

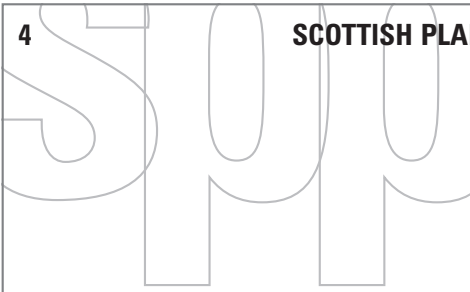
16. This PAN identifies good practice for managing change. It provides advice on funding and the implementation of proposals, as well as a checklist for appraising conservation areas. Conservation areas are living environments where change must be carefully managed.

- **PAN 72 Housing in the Countryside (2005)**

17. New developments in the countryside, if properly planned, sited and designed, should contribute to the quality of a landscape. The intention is to create more opportunities for good quality rural housing which respects the Scottish landscape and building tradition. The advice is not, however, intended to be a constraint on architects and designers wishing to pursue innovative and carefully considered contemporary designs. PAN 72 updates and replaces PAN 36 *Siting and Design of New Housing in the Countryside*.

SKILLS

18. Higher standards of design depend on the attitude, knowledge and skills of everyone involved in the development process. To encourage and promote a wider interest in urban design amongst planning students, an award entitled the Designing Places Award was launched in 2002 in association with the national programme delivered by The Lighthouse. This is linked to the Scottish Awards for Quality in Planning organised by the Royal Town Planning Institute (RTPI) in Scotland and the Scottish Executive. The aim of the Awards has been to stimulate the creativity of those involved in planning, both in the process and in the quality of development on the ground, and to raise the profile of good planning practice.
19. Following the 2004 Spending Review, the Executive has established a Planning Development Budget comprising £2.25 million over the period 2005/06 to 2007/08. The money will be used to support modernisation and reform of the planning system, particularly by supporting local authorities in addressing skills and training needs within planning departments.



20. Possible uses for the funding include establishment of new Continuing Professional Development programmes for local authority planners, including areas such as design skills. The money will also target measures to support and encourage better engagement between planning departments, developers and communities, and initiatives to help planning authorities develop awareness and understanding of the needs of businesses.

ARCHITECTURE AND DESIGN SCOTLAND

AIM

21. Architecture and Design Scotland (A&DS) has been established by Scottish Ministers as the national champion for good architecture, design and planning in the built environment. The aim is for A&DS to operate within the Executive's policy framework on architecture and design, as well as in partnership with a range of bodies in the private and public sector to help turn the aspirations of policy into reality.
22. The aim is to raise the quality of new development, so that high standards of layout and design are the rule, not the exception. Overall, the development of well designed and attractive cities, towns and villages will support Ministers' determination to make Scotland a better place to live, work and visit.

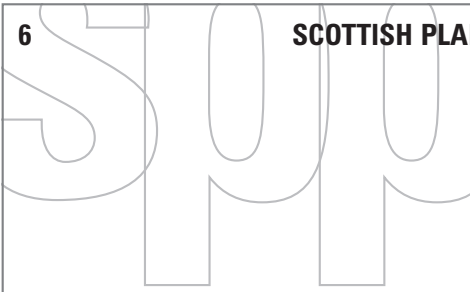
ROLE

23. The role of A&DS is to be proactive in promoting the qualities and benefits of good design by:
 - **Inspiring** excellence in all kinds of development from housing estates to major cultural buildings, and in all parts of the country
 - **Encouraging** high quality public buildings (e.g. schools and hospitals) and public places
 - **Stimulating and supporting** a demand for better design by clients and the public for improved quality from investors, developers and the design professions
 - **Working** in partnership with local authorities, government agencies, professional bodies, Non Government Organisations (NGOs) and, where appropriate, local communities to develop effective design policies, frameworks and guidance
 - **Improving** skills in design of the built environment through training by working with universities and professional bodies
 - **Communicating and disseminating** key messages, in a clear and accessible form, on architecture and design to a wide audience, including the media
 - **Building up** evidence which demonstrates the value of investment in good design
 - **Considering** new thinking on how the built environment needs to respond to

drivers such as climate change, the sustainable development agenda, technological advances and demographic changes

RESPONSIBILITIES

24. A&DS will be an approachable organisation able to offer informal and impartial advice to a range of stakeholders involved in the design process. Examples of the type of advice which can be sought include information on commissioning buildings, best practice in drawing up master plans and help with the wording of design policies in development plans. A&DS will confirm in writing if it is unable to offer advice.
25. As well as providing general advice, the other key responsibilities of A&DS are:
 - **Design Review**
26. Design Review offers expert advice on the quality of design for selected planning applications. To achieve the best value out of the design review process it is advisable to ensure that engagement takes place as early as possible within the development of a project. Ideally this is at the pre-application stage, prior to an application being made to a planning authority.
27. Projects considered for Design Review can be of all types and sizes but generally, they will be considered either to be of strategic significance, have a significant impact on the local environment, be particularly sensitive or set new standards for the future. The table overleaf provides more details of the type of proposals where applicants and planning authorities should seek advice from A&DS:
28. Depending on the nature of the application the Design Review process will operate in two ways. Those projects considered to be of strategic significance or particularly sensitive will be considered through meetings with a Design Review Panel of A&DS. Other projects will be dealt with by the professional staff of A&DS, in consultation with members of the Design Review Panel. Ministers attach great importance to the Design Review process. The development industry, as well as decision makers on planning applications and appeals, must demonstrate what account has been taken of the views of A&DS.
29. In exceptional cases, applications for planning permission may raise design issues which justify them being notified to Ministers who may wish to call them in for determination. Under such circumstances, Ministers will have regard to the views of A&DS. In the case of an appeal which raises particular design issues, local authorities should notify A&DS, in case there is a need for A&DS to draw attention to any points which may need to be considered.
 - **Enabling and Advocacy**
30. A&DS will develop an enabling service in order to provide opportunities to explore key design issues with stakeholders and to give early hands-on advice for a range of organisations. This will entail offering tailored advice at an early stage in order to embed the qualities of good design into the subsequent project development.

**Proposals which are significant because of size or public impact**

- **Large buildings or groups of buildings** – such as major healthcare facilities, school buildings, large scale commercial and office developments, shopping and leisure complexes, major cultural buildings such as concert halls, museums or art galleries, sports facilities and high density residential developments
- **Infrastructure projects** – for example stations, airports and other transport interchanges, bridges, power stations and waste incinerators
- **Major urban extensions** – including new settlements and new suburban housing, industrial estates, and out of centre retail and commercial centres
- **Major public realm projects** – such as pedestrianisation schemes, new waterfronts, or proposals to create or enhance public squares, parks and civic open spaces
- **Urban regeneration projects** – such as town centre development and renewal neighbourhood strategies

Proposals which are significant because of location

- Projects on, adjacent or in close proximity to historically, culturally or ecologically significant sites
- Proposals which affect important views – for example into or from a World Heritage Site, National Park or other designated landscapes or townscapes, such as conservation areas
- Proposals sited on amenity spaces such as parks or waterfronts, or in locations which are critical to future development or regeneration
- Proposals which are sited at point of local strategic or townscape importance such as at an important street junction or in a central square

Proposals which consistently raise design issues or problems

- Residential developments, particularly on matters of density, layout and landscape
- Large scale industrial or commercial buildings
- Retaining the quality of urban settlements and resisting the erosion of the historic fabric
- Highway and parking requirements (and traffic management) including street furniture, that erode the quality of place

Other Proposals

- Proposals which are likely to establish the planning form or architectural quality for future large scale development or redevelopment
- Proposals which are out of the ordinary in their context or setting and may have an undue influence on their immediate environment
- Proposals which contain design elements or features which if repeated would become particularly relevant to the quality of everyday life

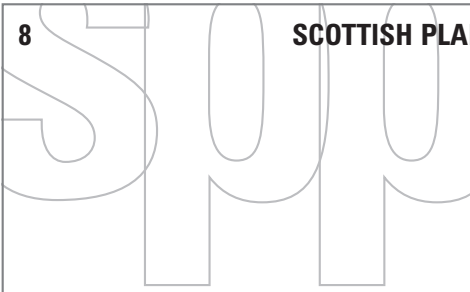
31. To help advocate good design, A&DS will promote design training and organise workshops to improve possible skills gaps. It will support events such as conferences and seminars targeted at key decision makers, local authorities, developers and clients, as well as community groups. It will also assist local authorities who wish to run design training schemes for planning officials or members of its Planning Committee.

- **Research and Communication**

32. A&DS will collect evidence which demonstrates the socio-economic and environmental value of good architecture and design. Through this, it will develop a research base which will serve to underpin its work.
33. A&DS will also work on research programmes with academic institutions, as well as linking into research that is already being carried out by bodies such as the Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment (CABE) in England and the Design Commission for Wales. Research will also focus on the 'building futures' initiatives to identify and address the key drivers that will shape the built environment over the next generation. Where appropriate, findings will be fed back to those setting policy, particularly the Scottish Executive.
34. A&DS will actively communicate its core messages and the promotion of best practice to a wide audience, including the media. One of the methods it intends to use to do this is a website. This will describe its work and include a digital library of best practice projects, with exemplars in architecture and design. As A&DS develops, it will also disseminate lessons learned through publications, guidance, training events and seminars.

PARTNERSHIP

35. A&DS intends to work in partnership with a range of individuals and organisations including: planners, urban designers, architects, engineers, surveyors, developers, local authorities, other public sector bodies such as Historic Scotland, the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland (RCAHMS), Communities Scotland, Scottish Enterprise, Highlands and Islands Enterprise, National Parks, Scottish Natural Heritage, private sector representative bodies, such as Homes for Scotland, national agencies, professional organisations such as the Royal Town Planning Institute (RTPI) in Scotland, the Royal Incorporation of Architects in Scotland (RIAS), the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors (RICS) in Scotland, the Landscape Institute Scotland, charitable bodies, educational institutions, councillors, politicians and all who wish to consult, co-operate and work towards a better designed Scotland.
36. A&DS will have a particularly close working relationship with The Lighthouse, Scotland's Centre for Architecture, Design and the City. This relationship will be detailed in a concordat which is currently being developed and will be published later in the year.



RESOURCES AND ACCOUNTABILITY

37. A&DS has been set up as an advisory Non Departmental Public Body (NDPB). It will operate as a Company Limited by Guarantee. Funding will be provided by the Scottish Executive. To ensure that resources are targeted effectively, a priority for A&DS will be to engage with the people responsible for, or with an interest in, the built environment across Scotland. This engagement will begin with a consultation exercise to establish the nature and priorities of the work required, as well as fine tuning some operational details.
38. A&DS will produce an annual report to Parliament to advise Scottish Ministers on its activities and achievements. This will outline its progress on meeting policy aims as set out in *A Policy for Architecture, Designing Places* and this SPP.

CONCLUSION

39. Some significant improvements have already been achieved in the built environment, for example, through new landmark buildings and improvements to the public realm. The challenge for the future is to continue and strengthen this work. A&DS has been established to work in partnership with local authorities, the development industry and others to achieve improvements in the design and quality of all development, wherever it takes place. The objective is to ensure that any form of development has the potential to become the conservation areas and listed buildings of the future, and valued by the communities that use them.

NOTES

40. This SPP, other SPPs, Planning Advice Notes and a list of Circulars can be viewed on the Scottish Executive website: www.scotland.gov.uk/planning. The website for Architecture and Design Scotland is: www.ads.org.uk. Further copies can be obtained by telephoning 0131 244 7543.

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