

# appendix [3]

## INTERVIEW RESPONSES

## **STAGE 3 INTERVIEWS**

### **Local Authority Development Manager**

#### **IMPLEMENTATION OF DESIGNING STREETS POLICY**

- Council encourages new developments to comply with DS Policy. In some locations compliance with Designing Streets is not appropriate – for example extensions to existing housing developments.
- Developers have tended to take on what they are used to and adapt it .
- The input from Roads Engineers has been variable over the years but is now more stable. Previously where RCC has followed on from Planning Consent, a circular process has arisen where design issues are reviewed again by the Roads Department and potentially different design solutions required. There has been resistance to the principles of DS Policy, resulting in either hybrid solutions where traditional elements have been modified or reversion to standard layouts.
- There are no formal procedures in place for street design but developers are encouraged to go to pre-application discussions together with their transport consultants.
- Planners “anticipate” roads comment in pre application discussions, where they are looking for better layouts which anticipate traffic calming, and zones with shared activity.

#### **BLOCKERS AND SOLUTIONS**

- There is a need for a more flexible approach across all Planning Policy in order to achieve good street design. For example at Ravenscraig, a more flexible approach was taken and variety in the street scene was achieved
- A two stage RCC process would be helpful and the council is already starting to operate in that way, However, RCC integration at planning stage will require more detailed information from developers.
- Planners and Roads Engineers are unfamiliar with the geometry and character of completed streets which have been designed to DS Policy. They have practical concerns about visibility splays, services, restricted carriageways etc . Case studies would be very useful.
- Precedent visits are helpful – for new development at Ravenscraig, precedent visits were made to developments in the Midlands.
- Maintenance must be considered at an early stage as this is an important consideration

## **STAGE 3 INTERVIEWS**

**Involved in the assessment of Planning Applications and in managing the implementation of Designing Streets.**

### **EXPERIENCE OF DESIGNING STREETS POLICY**

Developments are at an early stage, there are no completed (built out) Designing Streets Layouts but some are under development.

### **IMPLEMENTATION OF DESIGNING STREETS POLICY**

- Changes to street design have been developer-led.
- There is a close relationship between Roads and Planning Departments.
- They are not assessing all applications using DS Policy. Developers submitting “traditional” layouts designed around previous standards are assessed against older guidelines. DS developments are assessed differently.
- DS implementation is a big challenge. It addresses only one part of the roads network and seeks to “rewrite the rules”. It requires a first principles approach to design and assessment of maintenance and safety for eg. standard roads widths, radii, turning heads etc. Because of this, decisions about compliance and acceptability are more difficult to define. This can lead to differences in opinion between roads departments and developers.
- The time needed to process RCCs can be longer as more detailed information is needed at an earlier stage, whereas previously roads engineers have been able to fill gaps at application stage.
- There is a conflict between using roads geometry for traffic calming and “streets first” solutions.

### **BLOCKERS AND SOLUTIONS**

- Running RCC and Planning Consent in parallel results in a need for too much detail too early in the process.
- A two stage RCC process would be helpful, and would allow Roads to define precisely what information would be needed to assess proposals at planning stage. Often developers will not have an engineer on board at this stage so this approach may prove more costly for them.
- Discussion with developers has indicated some concern about the nature of development in the future. An indication of the range of development types which can be achieved under DS Policy would be very useful.
- Guidance about how “designing streets” relates to the whole roads network would be useful. Where streets are also distributor roads can be an issue as there is a need to keep traffic moving.
- DS should be a better fit with rural locations where standardized roads layouts can be inappropriate.

## STAGE 3 INTERVIEWS

### Planning Department

#### Implementing Designing Streets Guidance

- Since 2007, they have had internal processes and groups in place to review policy and guidance relating to the built environment. They are therefore very used to integrating different design approaches.  
Processes include an “Internal Planning Process” which includes their own schemes which do not require Planning Consent – from cycle parking to street lighting. (As a result, Council-led projects can be the most aligned with Designing Streets Policy)
- They are currently consolidating existing Planning Guidance relating to street design into a suite of documents and this will align with Guidance for Designing Streets Policy. There will be six Guidance documents in total; at present they are 50% complete. This Guidance does not focus on the process, its primary role will be to explain the policies. This new Design Guidance will sit beside the “Guidance for Streets”. There is separate Roads Design Guidance at present which will be replaced by the new Guidance when it is complete.
- The Transport Committee is taking “public realm” onto its agenda.
- The current review of street design is being led by the Transport Project Board with Transport and Planning on board.
- The RCC process does not proceed concurrently with Planning Consents but there is an integrated approach to assessing applications at Planning Stage between Roads and Planning. It is important to remember that RCC is not part of the Roads Department’s main agenda and has to be processed through their budget.
- Where major schemes are being considered, all consultees come together for an initial scoping meeting at pre-application stage.

#### Maintenance

- Street trees are not adopted
- There is flexibility on materials – CEC take a percentage of bespoke materials into storage so that they are available for future repairs.
- The council adopts permeable paving and does not consider that swales are suitable for urban areas
- No Section 7 Agreements in place at present with Scottish Water

#### Training

- Training is considered to be fundamental and there is a training programme in place. Training has been provided for the Planning Committee

#### Blockers to development and potential solutions

- **Political Support** Good street design depends on the involvement of a number of LA services – from cleansing, transport, planning, public transport etc.  
Because good street design can be complex, the development of Guidance for Designing Streets Policy benefits from political support. *(For example Councillor support for amendments to processes; Special Interest Groups (for example Historic Building Trust) can input into Planning Processes.)*
- **Developers**
  - **Can sometimes be unwilling to use the Designing Streets Process;** some developers are not providing a design based approach and are applying standard solutions (often based on outdated roads guidance).
  - **need evidence that different, non-standard types of development will suit the market** – for example the Colony model. Evidence is needed to support money dependent decisions.
  - **prefer a degree of certainty** in terms of timescales, and design parameters

- **have house types which are not flexible enough** – difficult to bring them closer to the pavement or to alter the location of parking
- **Planning Policy:**
  - **Appeals;** schemes which are contentious can get by on appeal, the views of Reporters would be worth obtaining
  - **Robust policy and guidance** is therefore essential for Development Control to scrutinize applications; they will need evidence that design has been considered.
  - **The TRO Process** can result in resident consultation which results in conflict with Planning Applications
- **Good designers** are needed for good design
- **The public** – there is a lack of interest in place
- **National Updates on Designing Streets** would be useful

## STAGE 3 INTERVIEWS

### Council Planning Dept

#### **Implementing Designing Streets Guidance**

- Roads and Planners are managed under the same Service
- Training is in place for DS

**GUIDANCE:** Integrated Guidance for DS not yet achieved; there is Supplementary Designing Streets Guidance in place which was written 4 years ago (prior to DS Policy).

- Transportation will be leading a redraft of Guidance. There is no date currently set for this process. It is likely that a Project Team will be set up to progress this with a Report to Committee to set out all of the actions.
- When queries come in about Designing Streets, Development Management will point them towards Transportation
- There is some place-based guidance for specific areas

**PRE-APPLICATION PROCESS:** there is a formal pre application process in place, with responses structured towards specific sizes of developments. If a Developer comes in with an unsatisfactory site layout, a conversation follows about what will comply with Council Policy. The Team's experience is that Developers tend to cherry-pick aspects of DS that they prefer.

**ROADS CONSTRUCTION CONSENT:** RCC and Planning Consents are progressed in parallel in order to ensure an integrated approach. RCC approval is withheld until Planning Consent is in place.

- There is a consistent approach to personnel in terms of processing RCC.
- U/D works with Transportation. Swept path analysis is needed for non-standard geometry.
- Generally, details are required for specific junctions and key location, eg, Leven SLA.

**MASTER PLAN WORKSHOPS:** This comprises an 'Evolving Masterplan' process which can be mandatory when included as a Planning Condition. It is a 4 stage process held over a total of 2 days. An initial workshop is held with LA and Developer attendance in order to gain a shared understanding of design intentions.

Reflection time is then built in, followed by presentation of proposals at a second workshop which is used to determine and then record the Council's view of proposals and any further actions needed. Further conditions to the Planning Application are then added if required.

#### **MATERIALS:**

- Would need to be available in the long term
- Limited choice of materials
- Usually developers are happy with black top and there is not usually a demand for high quality materials.
- Adopting street trees – would need a specification to determine whether or not street trees could be adopted

### DESIGN DEVELOPMENT:

- **Local Development Plans** - Where Landowners are involved in Housing Allocation Areas the council develops SPG based upon an Option Appraisals process.
- **FULL Planning Applications** – can refuse on design grounds
- **PPP Planning Applications** – can challenge to improve.

Where sites are larger they are conditioned at PPP Consent stage in order that a **mandatory design workshop** is used to develop master plans. Workshops are intended to get to a shared understanding of what is required for street design and provide a 4 step process with reflection time built in.

### THE WIDER PUBLIC

Street Design is considered by Members in the wider political climate of economic development. Sites which have poor street design may thus still get consents and Member support if the economic justification is strong enough. *'I like a cul de sac'*

Local people are generally not aware of DS and can be uncomfortable with greater permeability, where development sites are located beside existing residential areas.

A Site can be in the local development plan – but locals are unaware of its status , *'open up your road and there are 120 houses at your back door.'*

### BLOCKERS TO IMPLEMENTATION:

- **Planning Performance framework not made for “quality”** Timescales for applications can limit input to improve design. Planners are now locked in to a time consuming reporting process as a result of the new Planning Act. As a result, processes are taking too long.
- It would assist if the LDP includes access points into new development on site mapping
- There is a lack of detailed design guidance for development control.
- Planning Departments response can depend on “skills” in the room
- Good design is needed from the developer.
- Smaller developments should be a priority – could set up an agreed system
- Big cleansing lorries are an issue.

## **STAGE 3 INTERVIEWS**

### **Traffic and Development Manager**

#### **GUIDANCE**

- The Council is working to the principles of DS but don't have new design manual based on DS.
- Using DS for broad principles: and previous roads guidance for detail.
- Guidance is still based upon older roads guidance to large extent, however they are modifying their guidance on a case by case basis.
- Street Design Guidance would be helpful which applies DS principles to smaller residential developments, incorporating cyclepaths and footways.
- National SCOTS guidance is under development but not yet issued.

#### **DESIGN DEVELOPMENT**

- Developers can be happy to reduce infrastructure but access and parking for cars will always be needed in what is a rural area.

#### **ASSESSMENT**

- Although they are happy to run Planning Consents and RCC in parallel, developers don't want RCC if possible – but it is needed for all developments consisting of over 5 properties. The process is structured so decision-makers are involved from the start.
- Where developments are larger (major developments), Senior Roads Department Management is involved in pre application discussions; in these cases a master plan is generally required for RCC, and this can be developed in stages.
- Some RCCs go reasonably well – others designers are not up to speed on DS. Issues include:
  - Extensive areas of shared surface.
  - Issues related to lack of permeability and linkage
- Sometimes they get swept path analysis from developer confirming that unique designs are practicable, but other proposals can be too complicated and unproven
- Water management;
  - Each site needs a bespoke solution agreed with Scottish Water.
  - SEPA do not insist on 2 stage treatment-discharge to sea.

#### **MATERIALS**

- Don't like permeable paving – filter trenches preferred.
- A restructured palette of materials to be adopted – this is currently under consideration.

#### **BLOCKERS**

- DS Policy is not a good fit with rural areas.
- There are issues with trunk roads which often travel through the centre of many rural settlements so DS cannot be used. ( eg, a trunk road goes through Oban, so there is no scope for applying DS in middle of Oban.)
- A 2 stage RCC process could assist
- Gradients can be difficult – requirements are influenced by DDA guidance but need wheelchair access -
- It could be better if one authority manages all SUDS system
- Section 7 agreements are never followed through



## **STAGE 3 INTERVIEWS**

### **Principal Engineer**

**Working specifically to coordinate the planning and roads departments within the LA. Both are within the same service.**

#### **Design Guidance**

Council has been rewriting their Roads Guidelines to suit DS. SCOTS are now developing national RCC Guidance which will be web-based. It will provide some Scotland-wide guidance supplemented by more detail for each Local Authority area.

It is at draft stage (circa 70% complete) and will go out for consultation in the near future.

Issues being considered include:

- Defining roads hierarchy – within mixed use development
- Addressing aspirations for narrow roads and shared surface
- Emphasizing the need for different ways of working; for example swept path analysis

Nevertheless, development designed to pre-Designing Streets Guidance is still accepted.

#### **Blockers to Development and potential solutions**

- Differing perceptions about the type of street design covered by Designing Streets Policy.
- Greater up front costs for consultants when DS Policy is used
- Some Development Control Officers need further training
- Aberdeenshire Council are currently considering the use of a materials palette
- A 2-Stage RCC might assist some local authorities but they already have an integrated process for assessing street design at Planning Consent Stage.

#### **Actions**

Speak again about best practice working relationships

#### **Design Guidance**

- Current Guidance for Roads Design is still based upon pre DS Policy. Some Standards are still relevant and should not be discarded

#### **Training**

- Some training courses have been arranged for staff, facilitated through WSP. These have covered the change from a prescriptive set of standards to a “design – led” approach

#### **Local Authority Implementation of Designing Streets**

- Within Aberdeenshire Council, the Roads Development Section is made up of 6 areas – each one comments on Planning Applications.

#### **Street Engineering Review /Quality Audit**

- If an RCC is needed for a development site, then a Street Engineering Review /Quality Audit will be required. (At PPP stage this is conditioned). These audits are based upon the requirements of DS Policy pages 57-59. If an audit is not produced, Roads will maintain their objections to the Application. In order to provide the necessary levels of information required for assessment, developers will need an engineer involved at an earlier stage than previously.
- Where a “non standard” layout is used for a development site, proposals are assessed utilizing a package of information from the developer including swept path analysis, traffic calming, geometries, junctions and sightlines, parking levels, full SUDs assessments, evidence of consultation with Scottish Water and SEPA; 3D visuals are helpful also.

- At MSC stage, conditions will not be cleared until Quality Audits and Engineering Reviews are produced.
- This approach has been rolled out to smaller sites (even 6 or 7 houses) and has been useful in that it has flagged up issues which could have caused problems at RCC Stage. This has led to improvements in SUDs siting, and resolved lack of thought about utilities.
- They have found that the proportion of applications without RCC has fallen. The Planning Application process takes longer, but obtaining an RCC can take less time.

*(EXAMPLE At the Elswick Development at Chapeltown, the LA and developer have used a DS Approach comprising Street Engineering Reviews and Quality Audits. The design team for Chapeltown have identified key concepts for design rather than developing detailed proposals for roads layouts. ( Roads Dept have not agreed to all of these as yet.) This is seen as the only way forward for a development of this size.)*

### **Potential recommendations to overcome blockers to development**

- The LA has a process in place which seems to work well, and a 2 Stage RCC process would not necessarily improve the situation.
- Learning by Doing has proved extremely helpful. Discussion at a very early stage has proved to be extremely helpful.
- Design Guidance is useful as a communication tool between planners and roads, and between personnel within the Roads Department who may be involved at different stages in the assessment process.
- It is helpful if the same personnel are involved in the RCC and Planning process.

## STAGE 3 INTERVIEWS

### Planning Dept.

#### Issues addressed when compiling their own guidance

Issues encountered include:

- Designing Streets is too vague for engineers to be able to use to effectively assess applications.
- Different organisations (eg developers, consultants) have different interpretations about what is required.
- There were lots of problems when DS was first introduced. Developers were using DS to increase density but street design was problematic in terms of geometries, junctions, materials etc.
- Developers “cherry picked” DS elements which suited them.
- Developers need a level-planning field; they are keen to minimise risk and maximise sales. Would a LA turn down a major housing development because of design?

#### Implementation; GCC's approach

- In the past not all LA disciplines were involved in pre application discussions, resulting in conflicting advice/requirement later on in the process (for example at RCC stage).
- In the case of Designing Streets, the need for a collaborative approach was initially highlighted at a regular Heads of Service meeting. A decision was taken to encourage rather than enforce good street design
- GCC considered how best to approach DS and decided on a Design Guide developed using a genuine multidisciplinary approach looking at all aspects of development;
  - GCC Road and Planning merged.
  - All disciplines involved in consultation process
  - Planners and roads departments have worked together
  - The Process has been quite challenging and it has taken 2 years to develop Guidance

#### Managing the Designing Streets Process

- All LAs need a strategic approach to management
- Effective management is essential with accurate records of all meetings
- GCC Process broadly follows DS Policy. Design Audits are used rather than Quality Audits and the Safety Audit aspect is carefully considered. Advice on these processes is in the Design Guidance
- The same Roads Engineer is involved throughout the process. Developer's engineers have now more scope to specify "non-standard" geometries
- 'Quality is Valuable'. Time and money is needed to do things properly.

#### Practice

A design team's skill set needs to be in place at the beginning of the design process.

#### Utilities and SUDS

- An element of future-proofing is always needed (*example; future communal central heating plants eg. Cube/Wyndford*)
- Government level intervention to resolve issues with Scottish Water would assist with implanting Designing Streets. GCC are willing to integrate SUDS ponds into landscape but Scottish Water requires a Sewers for Scotland adoptable standard pond. Designing Streets can exacerbate the timescales needed for negotiation
- Section 7 Agreements are not being agreed at present with consequent issues for maintenance.
- Treatment at source for driveways and filter trenches is not seen as a solution for individual private developers.

#### Materials – Maintenance

- Looking for black top or other material with a similar life expectancy and cost.

- Other suggestions will be considered.
- They are not prescriptive.

## **STAGE 3 INTERVIEWS**

### **Senior Development Manager- Housing Developer.**

#### **EXPERIENCE OF DS POLICY**

- **Very positive experience with some Local Authorities.** The LA suggested using DS Policy, as they propose to use it with all planning applications.
- The LA used masterplan as 'pilot' Designing Streets Project where the Council were looking for solutions, not issues.
- This masterplan is not yet on site but detailed application for Phase 1 has been processed.

#### **LA Involvement**

- Council Officer buy-in was essential; the LA set up subgroups to look at virtually every aspect of development with the developer – these groups included Officers from all relevant LA departments
- Significant up-front collaborative working was required. All LA Departments have been party to developing designs, which will be helpful in future consultation processes for further phases.
- The DS Process was a sound fit with Places for People working methods.

#### **The Process**

- We were happy to look at alternative roads layouts but significant further consultation was required than previously
- There were concerns about long term maintenance but technical information about construction technology is positive. It will be approximately 15 years before porous paving needs to be cleaned and renewed – this is being used at Twechar on a trial basis.
- Consultants prepared roads layouts in greater detail than normal for a Planning Application. Roads were fully designed. This involved more risk than pre DS Policy, as this work would have been abortive if Planning Consent had not been obtained.
- The process worked very well – a major application from submission to consent took 8 weeks. The intention was to process RCC and Planning Consent in tandem; this did not work in reality so there was a need to lodge RCC after Planning Consent was obtained. RCC went in last month. It is anticipated that it will be turned round within 3 weeks (as all issues are already dealt with)
- Quality Audit and Engineering Review processes were not used.

#### **Public Response**

- Previously Homezone type developments provided by Places for People have been very well received by the public. (these are very similar to DS Policy Street Design)
- There has been a positive response to the Twechar development so far
- Twechar looks very different to a standard housing development – will public buy the next phase of houses? This will be the true test of whether the public like this – measured in terms of sales.
- We recognize that sales and marketing for this type of development needs to be considered differently to a 'standard' development
- Designing Streets shared surface/ house at back of pavement approach means people are likely to be more social – forcing people to interact and create a sense of community.

### **Blockers**

- Concerns about extensive hard landscaping – there is a need to maximise environmental benefits and this may not assist
- Few DS developments have been constructed, so hard to visualize street designs
- Better, earlier consultation with Scottish Water would have been helpful
- There was no LA subgroup for utilities in place for Twechar and this would have been useful.

## **STAGE 3 INTERVIEWS**

### **Development Manager and Technical Manager- Housing Developers.**

#### **BLOCKERS**

**Conflicting Roads Department Advice:** there are issues coordinating RCC and Planning Consents.

Roads Department personnel attend meetings at Pre Application and Planning Application stages. Although personnel involved at Planning stage can be senior engineers, very often differing views emerge when proposals go to the Engineers dealing with RCC (following Planning Consent), when safety considerations are very often raised.

Some Planners are not comfortable with discussing safety aspects of street design and tend to step back at this stage, leaving developers and consultants to negotiate with Roads Departments themselves.

**Use of older Guidance:** often proposals are forced to revert back to design standards used in older Guidance ('tried and tested solutions' which are known to be acceptable) in order to negotiate the consents process within timescales and budget

**Vehicle Access;** there can be very little flexibility in terms of the requirements for LA vehicles

**Developers need to get it right first time:** DS requires a lot of design input at the start of the development process, much more so than previously. Significant time and effort is needed to comply with Designing Streets Policy, and there is a risk of abortive work.

**House Types;** it can be difficult to design a DS layout using standard house types.

**Timescales;** bespoke designs can be slower to process than standard solutions

**Maintenance;** better regimes for maintenance should allow developers to use a wider range of materials. Adoption of street trees and remote paths can be an issue

**Section 7 Agreements;** these have not moved forward, LA s and Scottish Water have not signed up to these

#### **EXPERIENCE**

- They are "ahead of the game" with their own design guidance in place
- Their response to DS Street Design generally incorporates a hierarchy of streets which can clearly be navigated around, these are pedestrian friendly with appropriate high quality landscaping. Traffic calming is provided using roads geometry eg. small gateways which slow people down.

## **STAGE 3 INTERVIEWS**

### **Housing Association- Development Manager.**

**With experience of the private and social rented sector.**

#### **EXPERIENCE OF DESIGNING STREETS POLICY**

- At present they have one scheme which is being developed within the new Residential Design Guidance – a document which has been developed by GCC in response to Designing Streets Policy.
- They will be taking over homes constructed as part of the Commonwealth Games Village, which has been developed using Designing Streets Policy.

#### **IMPLEMENTATION OF DESIGNING STREETS POLICY**

- **General Comments;** assessing proposals against DS can be difficult as it is an aspirational document providing general advice. It is possible that a design led approach to street design could be overkill for smaller developments where a standard based approach could be more relevant. Use of DS Policy where there are fewer homes could present difficulties for smaller developments.
- Greenfield land releases are still being made which conflict with DS requirements for connectivity.
- The current situation where RCC and Planning Consents are processed consecutively means that proposals can be reexamined after planning consent is obtained. This should be less of an issue now that new joint working system has been put in place. There are concerns about developing rear parking courtyards advocated by the council as these may conflict with Secured by Design Guidance.
- **The Public;** involvement of the community in design decisions – for example with a Focus Group at Sighthill. People seem to be generally happy with the idea of changing street designs, so far.

#### **BLOCKERS AND SOLUTIONS**

- Scottish exemplar solutions would be very useful. However those which have not yet, or only recently, been completed and occupied are untested in terms of their acceptability to residents.
- Better solutions for SUDs need to be considered – this is dependent on maintenance arrangements between LAs and Scottish Water. There is public resistance to areas of open water beside housing
- Roads and Planning Departments need to integrate their approach from the start of Planning Consent to the finalization of RCC
- A 2 stage RCC process would be helpful – with a first stage considering roads geometry and levels, and a second stage considering materials, street furniture and detailing



## **STAGE 3 INTERVIEWS**

### **Design Manager – Housing Developer.**

#### **Local Authorities**

- Currently/recently working with five LAs
- DS has had a positive reception from one of these councils.
- Sometimes, Scotia Homes has had a different experience with other Local Authorities – where there has been conflict between street design requirements at RCC and Planning Stages. There can also be contrasting opinions within Roads Departments. No issues reported with planners
- Forums with Local Authorities have provided feedback advising that Authorities wish to bring RCC detail/process into planning stage. They are happy to do this.
- Have a different, high quality product. Many Planners tend to focus on roads issues more than the architecture of a scheme and this is one of the greatest risks of the RCC process dominating the planning discussion.

#### **Process**

- Pre-application discussions are effective if LA is open to do this. 'Processing Agreements' are also useful.
- RCC/Planning Consents in parallel can be an issue where sites are likely to be sold on. However, costs for producing the level of RCC detail is not a huge cost and is key to ensuring a planning consented design is ultimately deliverable. Generally happy with RCC and Planning Consents in parallel at the moment.
- Quality Audits have generally not been a common requirement of old RCC applications, however more local authorities are indicating that it is an application requirement.
- Working with Scottish Water can be difficult – *for example developers must use companies often associated with Scottish Water to prepare impact assessments. These can ask for off site upgrades which Scottish Water should be facilitating as part of their asset planning provision where developments are already committed for development within Local Development Plans and secured use allocations.*
- SUDS is generally straightforward. Urban layouts can be an issue – in most cases proposals pipe water to SUDS ponds, in other cases filter trenches are used (other services routed around these). Major plant infrastructure is an issue.

#### **Designing Streets – opportunities**

- DS Policy is seen to be a chance to get ahead of other developers as schemes are more attractive. However, there can be differing opinions – some love it and some hate it.
- DS provides an opportunity for integrated mixed use development; a chance to integrate commercial activity within the scheme.

#### **Designing Streets – barriers**

- Generally more expensive because of non-standard detailing, more complexity.
- Costs can be an issue.
- Higher density of units not always achievable.
- Unwilling to pay for 2 stage RCC process

## **STAGE 3 INTERVIEWS**

### **Design Director**

#### **Barriers to good street design**

- Although some Local Authorities would appear to have adopted Designing Streets wholeheartedly, others are still using outdated (pre DS Policy) Roads Guidance which conflicts with Designing Streets.
- Successful developments based upon Designing Streets Policy are dependent on a good relationship between Roads and Planning Departments. However, the views of Roads Engineers often clashes with Planning Policy and Guidance. Safety issues are often cited. There is a consequent need for negotiation for every development site.
- Some Local Authorities would appear to have made a deliberate decision not to utilize DS Policy.
- There is a concern that 'compliance' with DS Policy becomes more important than a considered approach to good streets design
- The resolution of issues associated with services and utilities can have a very significant impact on programme and costs
- Given the points above, developers tend to take the 'line of least resistance' in order to progress applications as quickly as possible.

#### **Suggestions for better practice**

- Education is needed for LA Officers, who often have no skills for assessing street design.
- DS Policy needs to be further promoted to Roads Departments.
- A 2 Stage RCC could result in a more protracted process – the time take to get sites through the system needs to be balanced against the current economic situation

## **STAGE 3 INTERVIEWS**

### **Design Associate**

#### **Experience of Designing Streets**

- Recent experience of Planning Consents for residential development is limited because of the current economic climate.
- Some roads engineers can be reluctant to deviate from tried and tested solutions based upon older (pre DS ) guidance.
- Roads Safety is a critical factor for all roads engineers – sometimes it can be difficult to determine how credible newer street designs are, in terms of road safety.

#### **Suggestions for better practice**

- A robust assessment of completed DS Policy projects which have been implemented would be helpful
- A 2 stage RCC process could complicate matters. Although developers could have more flexibility, it could elongate the whole process. Amalgamating the RCC and Planning Processes could work better – resulting in a Planning Consent which covers aspects of streets design in a way which satisfies Local Authority Roads Engineers.
- Planners have the potential to break down the ‘single issue’ approach sometimes taken by other Local Authority Departments
- The Scottish Government could potentially assist by promoting schemes which are implemented and are working well.
- Well managed Pre Application processes are important. Although an initial collaborative approach could be perceived as expensive, it can save time and money later.

## STAGE 3 INTERVIEWS

### Head of Town Planning

#### Recently completed and ongoing developments

- **Project 1** – master plan completed, starting on first phase of development
- **Project 2** – housebuilder involvement in Phase 1 development (450 homes plus neighbourhood facilities) intended to be submitted for planning in Autumn 2013.
- **Project 3** – Planning Permission obtained, now going for RCC and house builders on board – site start September 2013. Council was involved from the outset – workshops were held with roads engineers. They suggested a Quality Audit – the LA were interested and forward-thinking. No detailed engineering information was provided at initial stage. No SUDs were provided in urban streets – run-off piped to ponds instead
- A total of 800 houses are planned in the first phase, including commercial and retail services to support the first neighbourhood.

#### Local Authority Implementation of Designing Streets

Successful negotiation of the consents process is very much dependent on the attitude and skills of Local Authority Roads Departments and Developers

- **Timescales can be longer when DS Policy is adopted, because a different assessment process is needed.** Previous Policy and guidance provided a palette of standard solutions which could be applied across a number of locations. Designing Streets Policy now demands a design led approach tailored to specific sites. This requires a very different method of assessment and many Local Authorities are still in the process of developing relevant Processes, Policy and Guidance. Often, Roads Authorities are still using old (pre DS Policy ) to assess proposals and it can be difficult for them to reconcile new concepts with older standards. CP advises that there can be an onus on developers to prove that solutions do work. There is a tension between road safety based decisions and place-making decisions. Review Panels unlikely to be helpful. Decision-making needs to be consensus based with both informed planners and highway engineers from both sides around the table.
- **Some Local Authorities see Designing Streets as a burden, but it is seen as providing a higher quality product.** The collaborative approach required from LA is a resource hungry process. Although it can be effective, some LA s are reluctant to commit to the same resources. “Exemplar design costs more”

#### Potential recommendations to overcome blockers to development

Integrating Roads Construction Consent and Planning Consent would not, in itself, assist. A period of debate and discussion about layout is required and fixed layouts at an early stage can be too rigid

- **A 2 Staged RCC process would be better.** Stage 1 could potentially cover geometry and is agreed pre-determination of the planning application and levels and Stage 2 cover detailed design. Stage 1 would need some flexibility – for example covering principles and approach for larger developments, rather than determining detail - consultants with the relevant skills and experience are in short supply. Stage 2 could be brought forward, but should not be a mandatory requirement. Similarly, excessive requirements pre-planning will slow the rate at which applications are brought forward. Roads Authorities need the discipline of a statutory process to engage with Stage 1 design issues.
- **Potential to redefine the role of the planner** – as a moderator. At present planners often lack the skill and authority to manage the DS process and to engage effectively with their Roads colleagues.
- **There is a lack of skills** Individual Officers within Development Management often lack design skills and it can be difficult for them to participate in discussions. Further

training for designers and road engineers could be useful, but principles need embedded in tertiary education.

- **A Knowledge Base** – an organization or membership body which acts as a body for DS Policy and which is neutral with an educational function – disseminating best practice and useful examples.

## **STAGE 3 INTERVIEWS**

### **Architects**

#### **IMPLEMENTATION OF DESIGNING STREETS POLICY**

- LA personnel have been used to a Standards driven process and find it difficult to make decisions within the processes defined by DS Policy.
- Negotiation with Planning and Roads Departments takes longer when Designing Streets Policy is used.
- In some cases, Planners and Roads Departments agree with an approach to development at pre application stage and Planning Consent is then obtained and RCC applied for. At RCC Stage, Roads Engineers then revert back to older Roads Guidelines and a significant period of negotiation is needed to develop good street design solutions.
- DS Policy is very general and LAs can be slow to adopt it. One LA has advised that “Roads have not decided what we think of Designing Streets yet”.
- Other LAs have reverted back to older Roads Guidance – for example still referring to Distributor Roads.
- There needs to be a demand for DS type solutions from the public eg. Poundbury is successful.

#### **BLOCKERS AND SOLUTIONS**

- There is already a range of Design Guidance available; further detailed guidance is not likely to be helpful, case studies would be useful in order to illustrate what can be done.
- A Place-making expert in the LA who could reconcile place and roads, together with further training for LA personnel on Designing Streets.
- Consents need authority in terms of RCC. A staged RCC process would be a step forward and give statutory weight to the Planning Process. It would need to have a degree of flexibility, perhaps agreeing a set of design principles.

## STAGE 3 INTERVIEWS

### Architects

#### GENERAL COMMENTS

##### Expectations/Assumptions

- Some Local Authorities have developed a set of assumptions about Designing Streets Policy, which do not necessarily fully reflect the document's content. Planners are interpreting DS simplistically - they tend to ask for:
  - Houses located at the back of the pavement, close to road
  - Shared surfaces
  - Less parking
  - Houses closer together-2 metres between gables
  - Poundbury type layouts rather than the development of original typologies.
- RSLs have concerns about rear parking courtyards.
- Differences in interpretation of DS Policy between different Local Authorities can be a problem – it would be helpful if assumptions are the same across all Local Authorities.
- There is concern that small Local Authorities are waiting for the larger ones to issue guidance.

##### Process

- The layout of Designing Streets Policy Document is difficult
- The bottom of the 'hierarchy triangle' (detailed design) dictates designers approach to wider design issues (illustrated in the 'middle' of the design hierarchy triangle)
- More detailed illustrations within guidance tend to be taken up by the development industry and LAs as standards – ie. Guidance metamorphosises into a set of prescriptive requirements.
- There is a fragmentation of approaches to SUDs. Scottish Water have not adopted some ponds, and sometimes drainage under street is not adopted – all residents are therefore liable for maintenance.
- Section 7 Agreements cannot be resolved between LAs and Scottish Water – as a result none have been adopted
- Utilities dictate road widths; Scottish Power will not install cables below monoblock paving and prefer tarmac.
- Safety audits are an issue.

##### Collaborative working between roads and planning.

- Planning Departments do not have enough urban design expertise. Because of this there can be a lack of rationale behind LA officers decisions.
- Requirements for street design can differ between Roads and Planning Departments as a result of a lack of collaboration
- It is difficult to meet with Roads Engineers to discuss proposals
- Sometimes Local Authorities will offer to assess proposals either using older roads guidelines OR Designing Streets Policy
- There can be Conditions on planning applications even though the roads engineer has already sat in on meetings where issues covered by conditions would appear to have been resolved .
- Roads officers in attendance at planning/ design meeting do not have authority in terms of RCC process. Agreements made with roads at planning/design meetings are subsequently challenged through the RCC process.

## **Timescales**

- Often told "RCC is on its way".
- Sometimes resolving streets design issues around specific projects can take a significant amount of time. In order to expedite consents, designs can evolve and become diluted – for example street trees removed, block paving restricted to footpaths and parking spaces only.
- There can be an impasse with SUDS between Roads Department, Scottish Water and developer
- Sometimes Heads of Service have to intervene to ensure that a decision is made.
- RSLs can't handle delays to their programme – they will abandon designs and revert back to less interesting tried and tested solutions because of threats to timescale.

## **Developer's Views**

- Some are happy to embrace DS
- Others see it as a way to increase density
- It is essential to address the use of developer house types;- integral garages and front driveways are difficult to integrate into Designing Streets Layouts, but tend to be what developers want
- Front gardens will be paved to accommodate more cars.
- A level Playing Field is needed for developers.

## **SPECIFIC PROJECTS**

### **Maryhill Locks, Glasgow, a phase of a master planned development.**

- Homezones got planning consent but then got knocked back by GCC at RCC stage .
- RCC/Planning does not permit the use of 'shared surface type materials' eg granite for pavements.

## **Suggestions**

- Case studies would be useful – the best way of helping would be to show good built examples eg. Craigmillar.
- Change the culture of highways engineers - often they do not want to work collaboratively with planners.
- Structure Local Authority Departments so that Roads and Planning are under the same Service.
- Senior staff with Local Authorities need to make decisions at early stages of development process, so that they are not over-ruled later
- Innovative SUDS solutions are needed to partner design proposals.
- There are some examples of Good Practice; some Councils are promoting “Designing Streets” schemes
- It would be good to have an independent auditor who is able to determine whether schemes are DS Compliant or not on a Scotland-wide basis (for example; Architecture and Design Scotland)
- Better design education for roads and planning officers
- Better Guidance is not the answer. It needs to be matched by the understanding of those making the application.
- Provide visuals for planners.



**21<sup>st</sup> January 21, 2013**

**Telephone Interview: Urban Designers**

Many years experience in the design of places using the methodologies and criteria identified by Designing Streets

Experience of A&DS Design Review

**1.0 Planning Guidance**

- LA Guidance can often be too technical , or can conflict (eg. Roads and Planning Guidance)
- Guidance (eg. on place analysis) cannot take the place of experienced designers
- Often LA's are not keen to use the processes identified in Designing Streets Policy (eg. Quality Audits)

**2.0 Understanding**

- Developers, their Consultants and LA personnel can sometimes have an imperfect understanding of Designing Streets Policy.
- The development industry could benefit from the input of more experienced designers

**3.0 Process**

- Area have not come across Planning Applications and Roads Construction Consents which have been run in parallel. Supports Running Planning Applications and Roads Construction Consents in parallel.
- The decision process within LA Departments can be protracted, with decisions referred to a number of higher levels and sometimes a cursory examination of design drawings (eg. to confirm cleansing vehicles are able to operate)
- Area have experienced issues with utilities providers who are keen to retain service strips.
- Not experienced issues with SUDs because of forward planning at an early stage
- Maintenance requirements can limit the choice of materials

**4.0 Case Studies**

- Developed and implemented innovative street designs at Craigmillar.
- Highland Council has supported the layout for the Housing Expo at Inverness and at An Camas Mor

**5.0 Suggestions for Improvements**

- All 32 Local Authorities do not have enough experience of Designing Streets at present.
- Appointing a Scotland-wide expert, or expert panel, to advise and comment on applications would be beneficial (eg. an organization such as A&DS or an individual such as Keith Gowenlock at WSP)
- Exemplar Case Studies should be helpful

**21<sup>st</sup> January 21, 2013**  
**Telephone Interview: Architect**

Worked on a wide range of master plans.

**1.0 Planning Guidance**

- All information has come through planning consultants with no direct contact with Las

**2.0 Understanding**

- Indepth understanding of design issues and development processes is extremely important in terms of moving proposals on with Planning and Roads Departments for Tornagrain
- Confirmed successful compromises were made at Knockroon in terms of street design an example being bin collection solutions in the courtyards/ mews locations.

**3.0 Process**

- Experience is that Designing Streets has assisted with the implementation of non-standard designs in Scotland
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**4.0 Case Studies**

- Tornagrain – ABC to contact Moray Estates – Andrew Howard
- Knockroon – ABC to contact the Princes Foundation

**5.0 Suggestions for Improvements**

- Having an expert (WSP) as part of the design team has been extremely helpful