
Farrell Review of Architecture and the Built Environment

Call for Evidence Questions

NOTE: You can use this form to draft and save your answers to the Call for Evidence questions as you go along. When you are finished, you can then copy and paste each answer into the relevant answer box on the online form and submit your response.

The online form can be found at www.farrellreview.co.uk “Submit your views”

Introduction

This Call for Evidence is to inform the independent Farrell Review of Architecture and the Built Environment, which relates to England.

As announced at its launch on 25 March, the purpose of the review is to inform the Department for Culture, Media and Sport's approach to its role within government of promoting high standards of design in the built environment. This is so that DCMS can continue to influence and shape policy across government, not least because the public sector is a major client/funder of buildings.

The expert panel headed by Sir Terry Farrell welcomes submissions from any interested parties on the following themes within the scope of this review. Included are some suggested questions to help guide your responses. Please ensure these stay within the four themes as outlined below.

Notes:

- You do not need to respond to all the questions.
- Short and concise responses are requested per question; if they are longer than 1000 words they should include a headline summary.
- The online submission form cannot be saved as you go; you must complete it in one sitting.
- Downloadable PDF and Word versions of the questions are available at www.farrellreview.co.uk
- We suggest you draft your responses in Word and then copy and paste answers into relevant question boxes on the online form.
- Please make clear reference to any existing research or publications relating to your response, and the parts or page numbers within it that are relevant.
- You will be requested to fill out some information about yourself or your organisation at the start of the survey.
- All submissions will be acknowledged.
- All submissions are for the use of this review alone.

- The Review will not publish all responses; however, some responses may be quoted in print or online. By responding to the Call for Evidence you consent to us using your evidence.
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1. Understanding the role for Government in promoting design quality in architecture and the built environment

The review will look at lessons that can be learnt nationally and internationally about the role for Government in promoting and achieving design quality. The role of built environment bodies and other organisations that promote the appreciation and better understanding of design quality in the built environment will also be considered.

- 1.1 Britain has some of the best architects and designers in the world but that does not automatically mean that standards of architectural design in England are as good as they could be. Why is this?
- Architects/other designers often have quite different views from those of the general public as to what constitutes "good design" in terms of aesthetics. There is likely to be greater accord between the two when considering how a building and its environment function.
 - The importance of engaging communities, politicians, business etc in visions for the sort of places we want to live and work in the future is often underplayed - the visioning element of plan making and development delivery can easily be overlooked in the rush to show 'progress' or lost in focus on process.
 - Design quality is not primarily about architecture – important as that is – but about the 'public realm'. Most of the architecture that gets built is inevitably 'background'. Given this, it is how the basic elements of urban form and what happens in these spaces that essentially determines the quality of and our perception of quality in our built environment. Architectural training does not perhaps give these matters the degree of attention they need.
 - Too few developments include for the kind of open and collaborative approach where the objective is purely to achieve the best built environment outcome for the wider community (the public interest).
 - It is vital to recognise the differing factors in play in shaping environmental change – and within this the importance of informed and sensitive clients.
 - We would endorse the NPPF assertion that 'good design is indivisible from good planning' (para 56). The design capabilities of the planning system at all scales should be at the heart of your review, and yet that is primarily the concern of another Department of Government.
 - Current pressure on Councils, real or perceived, to approve any development that might generate employment and investment relegates considerations of quality.
 - Overall it is important that lessons are drawn from organisational and political experience in this area. Opportunity should be taken to reflect critically on what has been learnt from the experience of the development of the RFAC into CABE and the changing role and relations around CABE over its lifetime as a quango. The extent to which the recommendations of the Bishop Review were not responded to by the

various parties these were aimed at must be of concern. Further, it may be valuable to reflect on the very different pattern of experience policy and organisational relationship which has developed in Scotland.

- 1.2 How can the "everyday" quality of our housing, public spaces and buildings be significantly improved?
- By careful collaboration between all those involved from the start of the process – architects, landscape architects, planners, traffic experts, drainage etc. The skills and working structures we need to shape / reshape places which are economically, socially and environmentally successful are too often overstretched and under-resourced. And yet placemaking and high quality design in new development has been used to create dramatic physical and economic regeneration around the UK (Manchester, Liverpool, Newcastle, etc.).
 - The Planning Inspectorate have a key role in this area in demonstrating solid support for planning authorities that take strong positions well supported by their policies in the area of design.
 - In emphasising the importance of up to date local plans, supported by appropriate design policies and guidance, and ensuring that local communities are properly consulted on the preparation of these documents and on specific development proposals, the Government has supported the principal mechanism of quality control. But success requires careful and consistent co-ordination on policy at Government level ie between the Treasury, DCMS & DCLG.
 - There needs to be recognition of the importance in long term sustainability and return on economic, social and environmental investment in producing places of delight which are loved and maintained by their users.
 - There is more to be done to make planning at all scales design quality and outcome focussed and less focussed on administrative and legalistic aspects. An important test will be the challenge of ensuring high quality whilst meeting the the depth and scale of the housing programme now required after decades of construction shortfall.
 - In this regard one wonders to what extent the current review of housing standards is giving proper regard to design issues and their interaction. Good design will also contribute towards meeting the Government's zero carbon buildings policy. Standards such as the Code for Sustainable Homes can help to encourage innovation and good design which meet multiple objectives relating to sustainable development. The Review must help to ensure the effectiveness of such linkages.
 - Similarly, planning guidance is due to be consolidated and updated very soon within the framework set by the Taylor Review around which all interested parties have been collaborating.
 - A common barrier to better design is the exclusion of highway design from the scope of planning legislation. Many designers still appear not to have regard to Manual for Streets, despite the first volume having been published as far back as 2007. Public realm designed largely around the narrow requirements of highway legislation, rather than the creation of good public places which happen to accommodate traffic, continue to mar our towns and cities.

- Surfacing and landscaping are too often ignored and deserve more consistent attention. An overriding concern to reduce future maintenance costs has reduced the urban public realm in much of Britain to a tarmac desert.
- More appropriate training in design is often needed for those who influence or make decisions on public realm matters.

1.3 Would having a formal architecture policy (as some European countries do) help to achieve improved outcomes? What might be the potential aims of such a policy? What might the benefits be and how they could be measured?

- A formal architecture policy would be unlikely to have a significant impact. In countries like France and the Netherlands which have them it is the supporting institutions, the government leadership in commissions of public buildings, and development collaborations with local authorities which are the significant factors (eg CAUE in France and Vinex in Netherlands).
- Any such document would have to sit alongside the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) so as to effect implementation, and the Localism Act. A core principle of the NPPF is to “always seek to secure high quality design and a good standard of amenity for all existing and future occupants of land and buildings” (para 17).
- There may be more value in setting down some core principles that underpin the design elements of the NPPF and provide a basis for locally sensitive design policies to be adopted within each Local Plan (please note here the impact of the Taylor Review framework for planning guidance).
- And there would be great value in a clear statement from Government of the importance of design and its adoption across all Departments and areas they control – the offering of leadership by example – and the legitimacy of parallel action by local authorities and other public sector organisations.
- It may be helpful to look back before looking forward. The 1953 Ministry of Housing and Local Government booklet on ‘Design in Town and Village’(HMSO), where Thomas Sharp, Frederick Gibberd and W.G.Holford look at the some of the key principles of design relevant to villages, urban residential areas and city centres.
- More consistent use of Design Review (cf Design Review: Principles & Practice published by the RTPI and others, 2013:
http://www.rtpi.org.uk/media/11214/dc_cabe_design_review_13_w_1_.pdf) could help significantly.
- Too often, development proceeds without the benefit of any site-specific design guidance that sets out best aspirations and design objectives. Developments where a benevolent landowner – most commonly the local authority - has set down design standards have a quality that is noticeably superior. The appropriate use of design codes is addressed in Design Coding - Diffusion of Practice in England (Carmona 2012: <http://www.udq.org.uk/sites/default/files/publications/Design-Coding-Diffusion-of-Practice-in-England.pdf>).
- Success would be widely adopted, reasonably consistently framed local design guidance and design reviews as norms – as expected under the NPPF.

- 1.3 What can local and national bodies do to promote design quality? What policy infrastructure would assist them in this important task?
- Central government has a number of interrelated roles
 - An exemplar in its own procurement and approach to procurement
 - An endorser in awards and celebrations
 - An influencer of its partners
 - A researcher of value and good practice
 - A disseminator of information and good practice
 - A funder of support and training and related networks
 - Ventures such as 'Better Public Buildings' should be continued.
 - As noted above the appropriate local policy framework is provided by the NPPF.
 - Local authorities can still provide local leadership in design and promote debate and professional development, but their capacity to discharge their statutory duties is being tested.
 - The requirement for simple Design and Access Statements to support planning applications should fulfil this role but is often disrespected and dismissed as 'red tape'. More direct encouragement by professional bodies for such helpful tools to be better used could help. Many local authorities make design awards and this should be encouraged.
 - Rating of all development outcomes e.g as at North West Leicestershire, could be a helpful way to get developers to pay attention to design.
 - Retention of the regional Architecture Centres has provided some focus for local expertise and innovation but they have no funds to expand their role and they tend to have an architectural rather than an urban/landscape design focus.

1.5 What other recommendations would you like to make relating to this particular theme?

2. The economic benefits of architecture and design, and maximising the UK's growth potential

The review will consider the contribution of architecture to the UK's economy, how the economic value of good built environment design can be demonstrated, and how it can be maximised in the future.

2.1 In what ways does architecture and built environment design contribute to the UK economy?

- A reputation for good, innovative design can encourage commissions from abroad. UK planners and urban designers have a world-wide reputation for their skills.
- Attractive and well planned places in which to live and work benefit the workforce and attract inward investment including tourism.
- Places that function well as a result of good design contribute to efficiency.

2.2 It is claimed that high standards of architectural and built environment design add economic value. Can this be demonstrated and, if so, how?

- Development sector interest in the quality of the created environment is often very short term, and ignores both the longevity and positive and negative externalities of developments.
- Research by Savills for the Prince's Foundation for the Built Environment (Valuing Sustainable Urbanism, 2007: <http://www.princes-foundation.org/sites/default/files/0707vsuooverview.pdf>) shows that sustainable urbanism adds value. They argue that neighbourhood-making is an art looking at streets not architecture, fine grain not big boxes, place-management and values examined per hectare, not per square metre.
- The *maximising* of economic benefits suggests a distortion of priorities. Economic value should not be seen in isolation but has to go hand in hand with rich social capital, green infrastructure and healthy lifestyles.
- TfL have just launched an online system for valuing good design: <http://urbandesign.tfl.gov.uk/Updates/Corporate/New-web-based-version-of-Valuing-Urban-Realm-Tool.aspx>
- Although underlying factors such as viability of an area are essential, good design can
 - reduce the level of community resistance to change cf statements from Planning Minister Nick Boles.
 - raise the value of buildings in an area
 - reinvigorate areas that have, over time, lost focus
 - attract other investment to an area and with it jobs.
- Other factors however, such as marketing or improved transport, will also play a part making direct correlation difficult.
- There would be great virtue in re-running the cross-over academic / professional research which underpinned the 2001 CABE Value of Urban Design publication; this clearly demonstrated that well designed schemes let faster and at higher rents than directly equivalent but poorly designed schemes.

2.3 What is the commercial value of our historic built environment for the UK brand and for local economies and tourism?

- Tourist interest in the historic environment has been measured by Visit England and spin off to the wider economy from this fairly estimated.
- English Heritage and its equivalents across the UK do an excellent job that generates income that, in turn, is reinvested in making our heritage assets sustainable and accessible.

2.4 How do we ensure the culture of architectural and built environment design excellence is part of a perceived national brand identity that can be exported and how can our expertise (such as place-making and sustainability) be offered to a rapidly urbanising world?

- By selling this as part of trade missions.

- By more actively supporting participation in design competitions and the promotion of UK planning exemplars.
- Perhaps we cannot do more than currently until we can demonstrate that we genuinely achieve design excellence and innovations on a regular basis.
- Whilst we have some great isolated examples of buildings and development, sadly too few developments are driven by a clear set of well developed and expressed design principles.
- Design solutions adopted for this country will not always be applicable to other countries with different climates, patterns of urbanisation and conditions. If we are looking to sell our expertise abroad, centralised support could be valuable in this respect.

2.5 To enhance market leadership in built environment design how can we ensure that the UK is leading and responding to innovations in technology, sustainability and communications in an era of rapid globalisation?

- BRE has provided world-class leadership in these respects, but doubtless could do with more support.
- There is also training provided through university courses and professional workshops, but one can always do more - particularly to learn from the building industry and other disciplines.

2.6 What other recommendations would you like to make relating to this particular theme?

- The economic, social and environmental costs of bad design are also worthy of consideration.
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3. Cultural heritage and the built environment

The review will look at how to encourage good new architecture whilst retaining the best of the past, and the value of our historic built environment as a cultural asset and in successful place-making.

3.1 How does architecture and the built environment contribute to our society and its identity and how should we evaluate this?

- The built environment contributes to society by providing a link with the past, a sense of stability and continuity with the future. The simplest way to evaluate this is to ask people how much they value their built environment.
- Our attitudes on this subject may have changed over time. For instance a great many valued, older buildings were lost in the sixties as a result of a determination to make way for new development; we now know better how to let old and new sit side-by-side. It may be that in our less certain times this link with the past assumes a greater importance.

- Since the existing environments represent around 90% of the environment we will have in 30 years time, sensitivity to the impacts of change deserves very careful attention (cf Urban Task Force Report, 1999). The new ideally needs to sustain and help us make more of the existing.

3.2 Do we value heritage, whether historic or recent, evenly throughout the country?

- There are significant regional and local variations but these are often economic at root. A survey on this aspect might be helpful.
- Priorities and rates of change will inevitably vary across any nation and it should be the right of every community to make informed choices.
- UNESCO's concern about the protections afforded to World Heritage sites in Liverpool, Manchester and London is instructive, in its illustrations of the tensions between cultural heritage and different types of economic benefits (standard and tourism).

3.3 How do we make sure that new architecture understands and responds to its cultural and historic context?

- The NPPF provides the key context here – section 12.
- The excellent work of English Heritage (EH) in the evaluation of significance and context is to be applauded. The joint EH / CABE Building in Context and EH Constructive Conservation series all demonstrate wondrous association of new and old – rather than the line of conflict / constraint often implied by Government and in the coverage of this area in the review prompt material.
- Design briefs can be helpful in setting out the key cultural and historic factors to consider as can an explanation from architects/urban designers as to how they have taken this into consideration.
- It may be worth reflecting on David Rudlin's work with URBED on a design strategy for Central Nottingham – which is based on clear understanding of grain and character and a categorisation of areas of "background" - where new buildings would be expected to sit quietly in a defined established context - and "stars" - prominent sites which need / would benefit from exceptional treatment where development would be procured through competition.

3.4 Are there characteristics in older buildings and places that are valued which are lacking in new buildings and places? What should the design of new places learn from the best of the past?

- Many older buildings were built with a large skilled labour force and contain fine examples of craftsmanship which could not be replicated today. Building in a technological age requires different solutions appropriate to these times. However we can learn from the way older buildings fit into their surroundings and relate to those who use them in terms of their scale, materials and function.

3.5 What is the role for new technologies in conservation to enable older buildings to meet modern needs and to be adapted with less impact on their historic features?

- EH (alongside others) has shown how new technology can be used to ensure less visible impact of adaptation on historic buildings
- But other factors such as provision of parking can also have an undesirable visual impact unless treated carefully.

3.6 What other recommendations would you like to make relating to this particular theme?

- The imbalance between the economics of new build and repair needs to be considered. The economics of repair are too discouraging even when there can be planning controls to encourage reuse of buildings. VAT impacts on this.

4. Promoting education, outreach and skills

The review will consider the potential contributions of built environment education to a broad and balanced education both as a cultural subject in its own right and as a way of teaching other subjects. Public outreach and skilling-up will also be considered.

4.1 What is the potential contribution of built environment education at primary and secondary school level, both as a cultural subject in its own right and as a way of teaching STEM (science, technology, engineering and maths) and other subjects?

- There is huge potential for teaching large parts of the National Curriculum using the local built environment as a living workshop.
- If this mindset were adopted and promoted there would be great incidental benefits in growing future generations who understood their environments better, cared about them and understood the forces which shaped and pressured them. In the long run these future citizens would be much better prepared to exploit the opportunities which Localism offers; in the short run we need to recognise the need for education and support in this area, including the development of local environment-based toolkits – and resource it.

4.2 What is the role of architecture and the built environment in enabling a better public understanding of issues related to sustainability and the environment?

- Architecture and the built environment can provide very visible exemplars of sustainable construction although some of this eg SUDs will be hidden from view and need other promotion.
- The built environment professions might be encouraged to produce a collective document for the careers services and for interested professionals within the context of a wider localism in the planning/development sphere.

- The local environment teaching toolkits might also be used with communities to enhance local awareness and understanding – and essential base for Neighbourhood Plans.

4.3 How can high standards of design be achieved and promoted through neighbourhood plans?

- Some, but too rare, successful neighbourhood plans have involved home-grown experts in design. In other cases an outside mentor could be useful but would need to be funded.
- Community-led urban design through bodies such as Planning Aid, the Prince's Trust and Glasshouse, provide exemplars of what can be achieved when resourcing is adequate.
- Some current plans are using local guides for design to good effect.
- Plans with professional input could be a good vehicle for wider understanding about ensuring quality in the development industry (as per 4.2 above).

4.4 How can we better ensure that awareness and support of high standards of design are shared among all the professions concerned with architecture, the built environment, and quality places?

- More shared education at undergraduate level.
- Joint CPD training between different disciplines and joint workshops and events can be of value. RTPI Networks – and the Urban Design Network in particular - have performed a useful service in this regard.
- The Building for Life criteria are a valuable example/platform for encouraging shared thinking and guiding thresholds for performance.
- The planning and development process needs a more consistent demand for design-related skills rather than the peaks and troughs we get through the cyclical demands of the property-led economics of boom and bust.
- The professions have previously worked together through the Urban Design Alliance, but this withered in a context where CABE was seen as doing this for all. We may need to reinvent this inter-professional collaboration in the post 'big-CABE' world.

4.5 How can we ensure fair representation (gender, ethnicity, class, etc) and better preparation for those wishing to enter into higher education and the built environment professions?

- Much is already done to encourage different groups by gender and ethnicity to enter the professions and there are a number of role models to encourage this. Architecture is a long course (with courses such as engineering, landscape architecture and planning only slightly shorter) and cost may deter some from entering these professions. There is however already provision for a year out break in some of these courses to enable students to earn money.
- The retention of part-time education in multi-discipline, postgraduate design and built environment courses, with appropriate funding, should be encouraged.

- Apprenticeship schemes as an alternative way of studying and earning at the same time might be promoted.

4.6 What other recommendations would you like to make relating to this particular theme?

Please **submit your responses via the online form** that can be found at:
www.farrellreview.co.uk . We regret that emailed attachments of this document will not be considered as evidence.

Please respond by **5pm, Friday 19th July 2013** (six weeks from the opening of the call). Replies after that time may not be taken into consideration.