

## **Aberdeen Land Use Forum - Design Campaign**

Minute of meeting – Tuesday, 12 May 2009

Committee room 2 – 3, Town House, Broad Street, Aberdeen

6.00 p.m. – 8.00 p.m.

### **Attendance:**

Present: David Miller (Chair Land Use Forum), Margaret Bochel (Head of Service, Planning and Infrastructure), John Michie (ACCA), Lavina Massie (TACA), Guus Glass (Civic Forum), Andrew Carruthers (Aberdeenshire Council), Terry Mackie (Architecture and Design Scotland), Sandra Bruce (Equalities Action Network), Christine Dalziel (Halliday Fraser Munro), Jill Paterson (Halliday Fraser Munro), David Jennings (Aberdeen City and Shire SDPA), Robert Collier (AGCC), Arthur Forbes (Civic Forum), Connie Leith (The Ferryhill Heritage Society), Rebecca Oaks (ACC), Donna Laing (Facilitator, Land Use Forum),

### **Speaker:**

Mr Sandy Beattie (Team Leader, Masterplanning and Design, ACC)

### **Apologies:**

Councillor Muriel Jaffery, Gale Beattie (Team Leader, ACC), Alison Wisely (LUF), Richard Bush (RTPI Grampian Chapter / LUF), Ailsa Duncan (Community Planning and Regeneration, Aberdeen City Council), Gerry Donald (NHS), Louise MacSween (ACC), Ross MacLennan (ACC), Kathryn Hossack (ACC).

### **1. Introduction:**

Professor David Miller welcomed and introduced the audience and the speaker to the Land Use Forum.

### **2. Presentation:**

Sandy Beattie presented on the Aberdeen Design Campaign. A copy of the presentation can be found at the Land Use Forum Website:

[www.communityplanningaberdeen.org.uk/Internet/ChallengesandChallengeForum/LanduseandEnvironment/LandUseMinutes.asp](http://www.communityplanningaberdeen.org.uk/Internet/ChallengesandChallengeForum/LanduseandEnvironment/LandUseMinutes.asp).

### **3. Discussion:**

**Q John Michie:** We have the second largest granite building in Europe but can we not investigate if we have the largest stock of domestic granite buildings in Europe/the world?

**A Sandy Beattie:** These are the kinds of things we should be celebrating through the Design Campaign.

**Q Terry Mackie:** Architecture and Design Scotland is supportive and welcomes what Aberdeen City is doing with the Design Campaign. The issue of maintenance is one that causes concern. Is there a way that maintenance of buildings can be build into schemes?

**A Sandy Beattie:** Yes, but it is difficult. There seems to be concern over the public and private split of open space whereby people are unsure of ownership. This especially seems to be the case in flatted properties with gardens and some local authority housing areas.

**Q Connie Leith:** I'm glad about the design campaign and that it is looking at improving design throughout the city, but what can be done to improve the 'ugly' buildings that are being built just now, for example the Bells Hotel?

**A Sandy Beattie:** The spaces between buildings are just as important as the buildings themselves. Tall buildings are good for the city centre provided that are situated in the correct place and that views and vistas are not destroyed. The right development has to take place in the right place.

**A Maggie Bochel:** Vibrant and dynamic buildings are necessary to create vibrant and dynamic cities.

**A John Michie:** I support Maggie on this point.

**Q John Michie:** What we need to go back to with house design is terrace housing that is attractive, energy efficient, functional and high density.

**A Sandy Beattie:** Hopefully this is the kind of thing you will see happening over the next few months and especially in Cove where the Princes Trust is working. We should be trying to build the Rosemount/West End pattern of building again i.e. terrace and where streets meet street to improve accessibility. With tall buildings we need them to be built in the correct places and to be a high design quality.

**Q David Jennings:** We have been in a cycle of bad development over the past twenty years, how do we break out of this? How do we move to a new paradigm regarding design?

**A Sandy Beattie:** By working with stakeholders, also the Design campaign is all about thinking differently regarding design. We will be working with private companies, RIAS and RTPI Chapter, and we will set up a Design Review which will be a peer review panel with the task of assessing the design quality of applications. What is also important is that we have the commitment to refuse applications on grounds of design and that the Scottish Government supports us. Architecture and Design Scotland have been hugely supportive of the design campaign. We will also ensure that we have strong design policies in the local development plan and be sure to look at best practice from other elsewhere.

**A Maggie Bochel:** Change will not happen quickly but encouraging good quality design is a start. We have to promote living in streets and terraces as the last twenty years all that's been build is cul-de-sacs and detached houses.

**A Sandy Beattie:** Also we want to involve communities in the design of places. How do we do this effectively?

**Q Andrew Carruthers:** How do we get from bad design to good design? It is a complex thing, and we've been doing it badly for the last twenty years. It's also about engaging stakeholders in culture change.

**A Sandy Beattie:** The new planning legislation and the new building standards regulations will assist in culture change. Also there has been no range in the housing that has been on offer over the past twenty years. People only had the choice of a three-bedroom semi-detached in a low-density development that was car orientated.

**A Jill Paterson:** Clients are asking for and wanting high quality design and for this to happen they feel community engagement is necessary. It is hard to initially begin engagement, especially as people feel that by talking with you they are deemed to be supporting development, when this may not be the case. People may want to express options about design and good design or what will make things better.

**Q Lavina Massie:** There's needs to be longer engagement on the Developer Options.

**A Jill Paterson:** We appreciate the city council arranging the developer workshops in June.

**Q Terry Mackie:** The Design Review Body is an important part of the Design Campaign and developer, consultants will need to submit to the Review Body early on in the design/consultation process to iron out any design issues.

**A Maggie Bochel:** Under the new planning act all major projects have pre-application discussions with the planning department. These discussions should begin to help with the early development of design.

**Q Lavina Massie:** Will the Police Architecture Liaison Officer be involved?

**A Sandy Beattie:** Yes, he is involved.

**Q John Michie:** Is this not an issue of the cart before the horse? Do we not need to get the infrastructure sorted before we start to think about hosing and design?

**A Maggie Bochel:** We had in-depth discussions on this when we were developing the structure plan.

**Q John Michie:** Could planning gain pay for infrastructure improvements?

**A Maggie Bochel:** Unfortunately, with the current financial situation there is limited money for planning gain.

**Q David Jennings:** Linking into the Scottish Sustainable Communities Initiative can we hope to provide an exemplar of good design to show communities and developers what we are looking for?

**A Sandy Beattie/Maggie Bochel:** Yes that is what we would like to achieve.

**Q Connie Leith:** What are the future conservation areas of the future in Aberdeen?



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**A Sandy Beattie:** At present I believe some parts of Torry should be a conservation area. We have to think about what we want to conserve for the future, what you want to achieve by deeming something a conservation area, what will last 100 years. It's also important to note that it is not just buildings that make a conservation area but the spaces, street patterns. For example Rosemount is a Victorian extension of the city and it is the street pattern, parks and buildings that give it character. The guidance from the Scottish Government wants to recreate this.

What we want to do with the design camping is leave a legacy of our time.



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