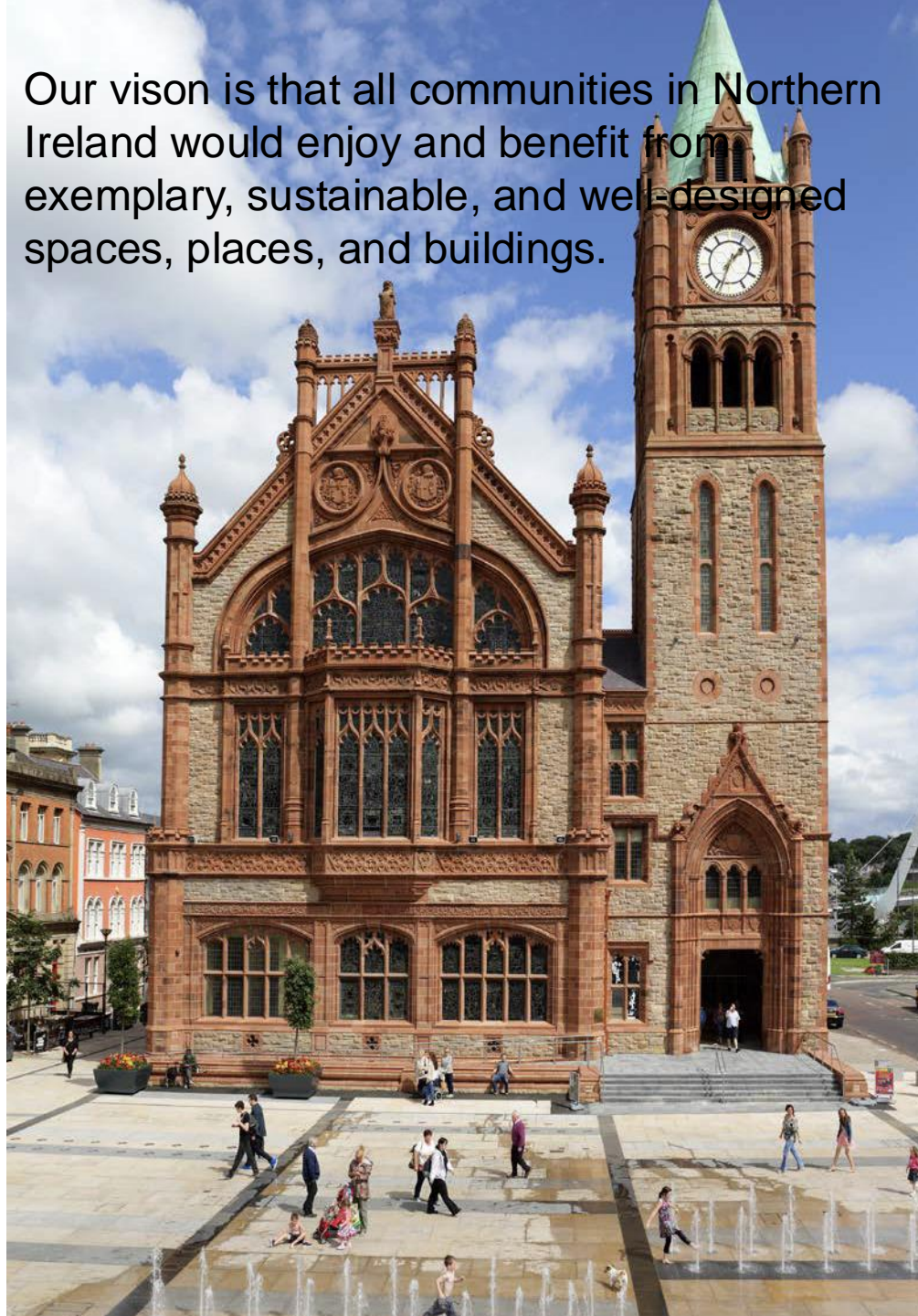


# What is a **DESIGN REVIEW?** Process + Benefits

**ciarán mackel**

Our vision is that all communities in Northern Ireland would enjoy and benefit from exemplary, sustainable, and well-designed spaces, places, and buildings.



# Briefing and Design Reviews

January 2021



Decisions in respect of the commissioning and design of buildings, spaces and places have a profound and long-lasting effect on society; buildings spaces and places provide shelter and meet other requirements of accommodation and function, but they also impact on our individual and collective sense of well-being and indeed our shared opportunities for happiness - ***good design is about well-being.***

Qualitative criteria in respect of buildings spaces and places can be complex and need particular expertise to assess yet the hard evidence confirms that investment in good design contributes to improved social, economic and environmental outcomes - ***good design pays.***

Cost and time dominate conversations around development but tend to ignore the very significant lifetime costs involved in all investments in the built environment. We may perceive non-essential attributes to be unaffordable but poor design may well cost more in the medium and long term - ***good design is good value.***

The places we inhabit matters - the setting for our unique and diverse cultural inheritance and our future development. We have a responsibility to future generations to make informed and equitable decisions about our heritage and resources. Good design is about the balancing of often complex and competing criteria to evolve efficient, balanced, equitable, sustainable solutions for this society - ***good design is ethical.***

The Policy on Architecture and the Built Environment seeks to ***ensure real value from public expenditure*** by advocating excellence in design quality, promoting civic stewardship, supporting excellent briefing and associated capital investment decisions that will enhance the built environment and visual landscape thereby improving the lives of everyone in Northern Ireland now and in the future.





## **Briefing Reviews**

Briefing reviews allow for engagement at the inception stage of a project

They allow for identification of project potential in the wider context

As such they are distinct from, but parallel to, feasibility planning and business planning



## **Briefing Workshops**

The early strategic decisions on the project's aims, location, and consultant team will have a profound impact on overall project quality

Briefing Workshops can consider wider social, environmental and economic contexts in setting an holistic strategic ambition for the project

This can help ensure project potential is optimised with respect to contributing to the urban or rural environment and the community in which it is based.

## **Design Review**

Design is a complex collaborative process involving competing criteria, functionality, aesthetics, problem solving through synergies, matching of time and resources, all to be creatively resolved into a holistic integrated proposal. While check lists are useful and have their place, good design is more than the sum of individually acceptable decisions.

The Design Review is a collaborative ***non-adversarial platform which supports the design process through timely expert independent inputs***. These inputs will constructively challenge assumptions and identify further potential within design strategies,

## **Speak in possibilities, not absolutes!**

In general, try to use the language of options, alternatives and possibilities rather than stating what must be done.

e.g.

*“Locating the main entrance on Market Square may help resolve the problems you’ve outlined and may provide greater opportunity to add more active frontage to the main pedestrian area.”*

not

*“It would be far better if you revised the ground floor plan to locate the main entrance on Market Square.”*

## **Design Reviews**

During the design process Design Reviews constructively challenge assumptions and identify further potential within proposals.

They offer:

A non-adversarial, collaborative approach

Free, expert, independent advice

A peer review process based on national and international best practice

## **Status of Design Reviews**

Design Reviews are offered by MAG and carry no statutory status within the planning process

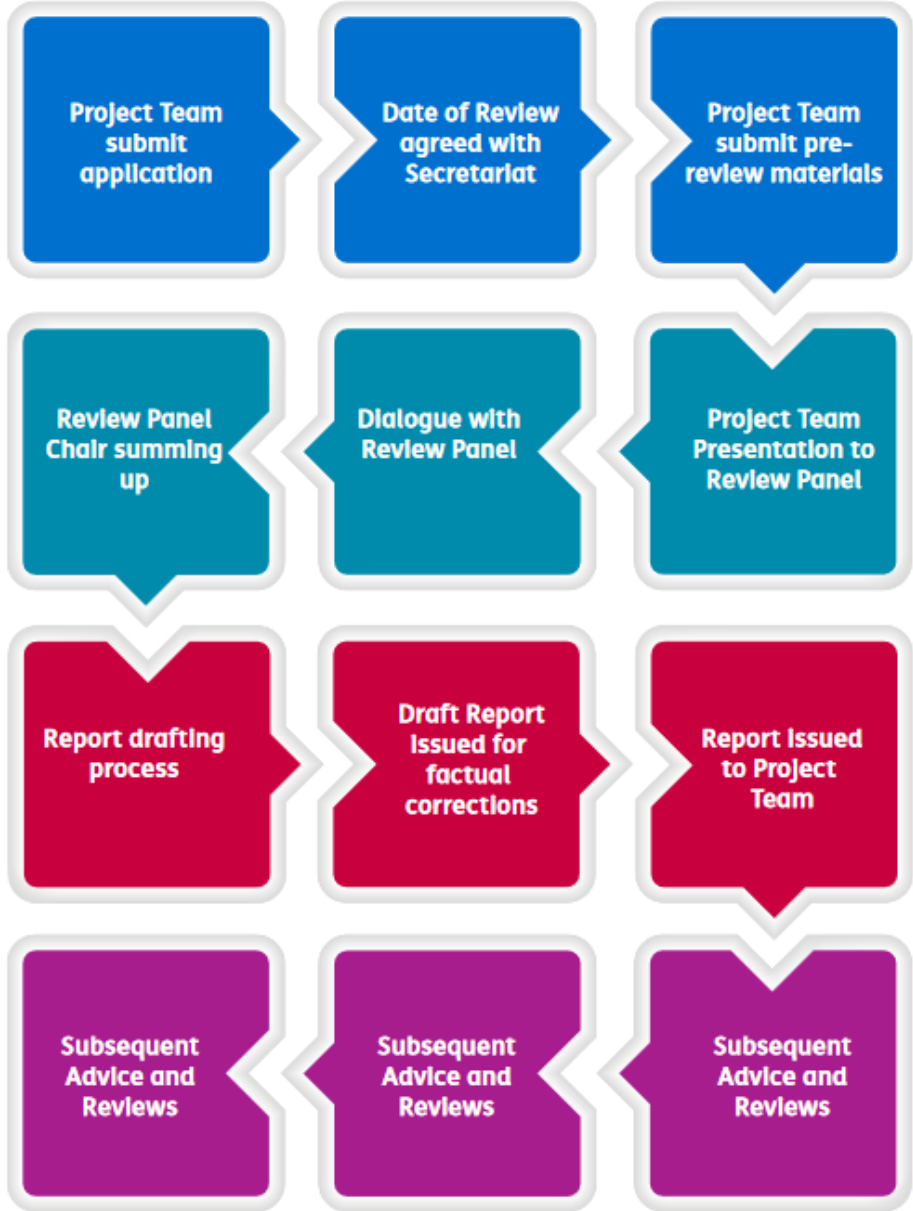
When a project is referred to MAG for Design Review by the Planning Authority (PA), the report will be issued to the PA and the PA may decide to treat the report as a material consideration.

The Design Review Reports will be restricted to the Project Team and the MAG will comply with the teams wishes concerning the distribution of the report. It will not be placed in the public domain or copied to Planning Officials.

If the Project Team or Planning Authority choose to bring the report into the public domain, it must be published in its entirety.

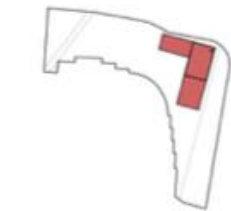
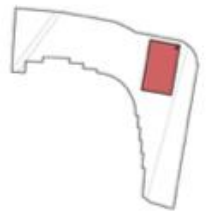
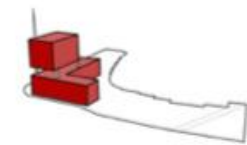
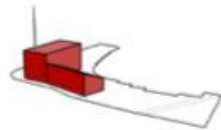
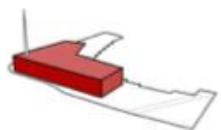
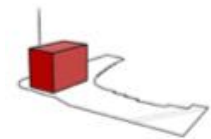


# Diagram of Review Process

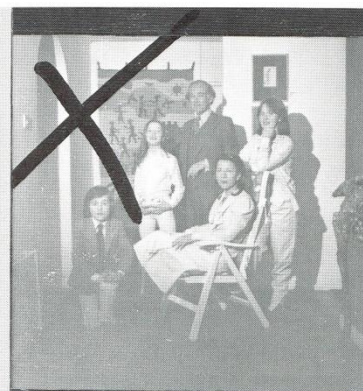








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The typical Design Review includes

- Members of the design team
- The client
- Local Authority officers
- Specialist advisors /consultants
- Observers
- And 3 – 4 members of the MAG panel of advisors, including the chair

The typical meeting structure is as follows:

- Introductions 5 mins
- Client comments 2 -3 mins
- Presentation by the design team 15 - 20 mins
- Comments from others 5 - 10 mins
- Questions for clarification by MAG 10 - 20 mins
- Comments from MAG advisors 60 mins
- Final observations 10 mins
- Summary by the MAG chair 5 mins

## **Design Review Report**

'Hot' feedback is provided at the end of the Design Review meeting

A report with a full summary of the Panel's comments and observations is normally issued within 14 days

The full report will be issued to the primary contact for the referral.

If the scheme is referred by the Planning Authority (PA), the report is issued to the PA.



The sub-headings of the report will be tailored to suit the scheme but generally, they consist of the following:

Urban design and placemaking

Safety and security to help support TEO Strategic Framework to end violence against women and girls

Landscape and topography

Sustainability (Climate Change and Biodiversity )

Transport, connectivity and movement

Building design

Heritage

## **Sustainable development including, response to climate change**

The term climate change is broader than net-zero and the design proposals are expected to consider other aspects including higher temperatures, wetter winters, hotter summers, flood risks, sustainable materials, integrated and sustainable travel.

## **The benefits of the Design Review process**

Added value through design advice

Expertise brought to bear for the benefit of the scheme

Transparency in spending public money

Positive impacts on behaviours

Can speed pathway to a consent

*'The involvement of MAG was extremely positive at both Coleraine & Ballymena NRC. As independent professional advisors they provided sound advice which improved the architectural proposals and aided the planning process. I was particularly impressed by their sensitive appreciation of all the project challenges including budget and programme which manifest in their willingness to partner towards agreed solutions which clearly benefited the scheme and the end-users. I would have no hesitation in working with MAG on future projects and would recommend them as a valuable mediator in the design development of future projects undertaken by McAdam Design'*

Martin Hare, McAdam Design, Managing Director

