

Scottish Awards for Quality in Planning

Planning Committee
21 April 2005

1 Purpose of report

- 1.1 To report the success of the City's Planning Service in the Scottish Awards for Quality in Planning 2004, presented by the Scottish Executive in association with The Royal Town Planning Institute in Scotland.

2 Summary

- 2.1 In the Scottish Executive's annual awards, the City of Edinburgh Council received the award as overall winner for the Holyrood North Site, Canongate. The Council also received a commendation for outstanding quality in the development plan category for The Leith Ahead Initiative.
- 2.2 A further award, The Urban Design Award for Planning Students, was received by a member of staff with two student colleagues.
- 2.3 In the UK-wide Royal Town Planning Institute Awards for 2004, a commendation in the Buildings in Context category was received by CDA in partnership with the Council and others for the Multrees Walk redevelopment of the bus station site.

3 Main report

- 3.1 The eighth annual awards for Quality in Planning received 41 entries in the categories of development control, development plans and development on the ground. The Judges looked for evidence of outstanding work, appreciation of sustainable development issues, community and user involvement, consumer testing and a significant contribution by the planning service, innovation, wider benefits and difficult problems tackled and resolved.

- 3.2 The Judges recommended one overall winning scheme, the Council's entry for the Holyrood North Site; two awards; and ten commendations, one of which the Council received for the Leith Ahead Initiative.
- 3.3 On behalf of the Council, the Convenor of the Planning Committee received the awards from the Minister for Communities, Malcolm Chisholm MSP, on 10 March 2005. A number of Staff in Planning and Strategy who had contributed to these projects also attended.

The Holyrood North Site, Canongate

- 3.4 This entry was by The Council, in association with the Holyrood Brewery Foundation, DSP Ltd, John C Hope Architects, and Scottish Enterprise Edinburgh and Lothians.
- 3.5 The Holyrood North site lies to the south of the Royal Mile, within the Old Town Conservation Area. The site was formerly occupied by Scottish and Newcastle Breweries. The Council recognised the importance and sensitivity of the site and undertook early work to offer guidance on its appropriate generation through the 'Canongate Redevelopment Strategy'. A design competition for the redevelopment of the site was launched and was won by Development Services Partnership Ltd who had engaged John C Hope Architect as masterplanner. The development is now complete, apart from one small plot which has received planning permission. The mixed use site includes social rent accommodation, private residences, private lets, student accommodation, cultural facilities, office space, hotels, shops, restaurants, cafes and a public house.
- 3.6 The Judges recognised the importance of this site to the regeneration of the area. The Judges believed that the quality of the environment is now exceptional and the layout reflects the historic settlement pattern. They were impressed by the sustainable mix of uses on site and consider this to be one of the elements of its success. The Judges noted that the Council displayed good management through the development of a strategy and masterplan. The effective communications mechanisms between stakeholders were also recognised. The Judges noted a sense of integration between old and new, realised through the quality streetscape design and materials. They concluded that the project is of such an outstanding quality that an Award is recommended. As the project also displays quality in management, sustainable development, partnership and regeneration, the Judges recommended that the project should receive the Overall Award for 2004.

The Leith Ahead Initiative

- 3.7 This entry was by the Council, in association with Forth Ports plc, Historic Scotland, Scottish Enterprise Edinburgh and Lothians, Communities Scotland, and the Primary Care NHS Trust.

- 3.8 Leith Ahead is a proactive partnership to secure economic, social and environmental regeneration, in an area of change where the retreat of dock industrial activity is yielding large scale commercial and residential development. The partnership has secured a £2.65 million Townscape Heritage Initiative investment package for Leith which includes building repairs, and public realm enhancements. The Partnership has brought together a wide range of agencies including the local community.
- 3.9 The Judges recognised that this was a challenging project, largely due to its scale and range of uses, landowners and agencies. They considered the project had a clear focus and were impressed by the range of stakeholders involved, including the local community. The Judges recognised that the Partnership were not just considering Leith in isolation, but were also seeking to secure its integration with the wider city. They recommended a Commendation.

Other Submissions

- 3.10 The Council submitted three other planning projects:

a. Edinburgh's Bio-diversity Initiative

The Judges congratulated the Council and the Edinburgh Biodiversity Partnership on its success. They were impressed by the number of organisations involved, each with specific actions. The judges were encouraged that bio-diversity guidelines were adopted by the Council as Supplementary planning guidance and look forward to the success of the next stage plans and action to 2009.

b. Edinburgh's Conservation Area Character Appraisals

The Judges acknowledged the Council's commitment to conservation through the preparation of 31 character appraisals, and recognised they were a tool to assist in the ongoing management of conservation areas. The Judges look forward to hearing how the appraisals impact on future conservation area management.

c. Edinburgh's Tree Warden Network

The Judges considered the role of the tree wardens to be vital to preserve and enhance the local environment, and recognised their important relationship to the planning process. The Judges supported the Council's commitment to trees.

Student Award

- 3.11 The urban design challenge for planning students received 6 entries. Students had to identify urban design improvements for a settlement, in association with the local community. The winning entry was by John Davies of Planning and Strategy with 2 other student colleagues from Heriot Watt. The Judges believed that these students produced a thorough piece of work and were extremely impressed with the professional standards of presentation and with the ambitious, yet realistic, phasing, funding and implementation plan.

The UK RTPI Awards 2004

- 3.12 In addition to the Scottish Awards, there are UK awards presented by the Royal Town Planning Institute. A commendation in the Buildings in Context category was received by CDA in partnership with The Council and others for the Multrees Walk redevelopment of the Bus Station site.
- 3.13 This project entailed the complete redevelopment of Edinburgh's bus station site. The site is located at the heart of Edinburgh's first New Town Conservation Area and within the World Heritage Site. The design concept is a simple one – a new pedestrian street lined with retail accommodation at ground level and a compact bus station cut into the slope of the land beneath. The resulting scheme, based on extensive analysis of existing street widths and building sizes, is respectful to the urban grain and scale.
- 3.14 The Judges considered that great design skill had been exercised in minimising the effect of servicing, and the key rested in the subtle exploitation of the levels of the site. The development fits excellently into its context, both visually and functionally. The Judges believed that the scheme deserves a commendation, as the partners had successfully knitted into the fabric of Edinburgh a subtle and sensitive development which sets a high standard for the redevelopment of other sites nearby.

4 Financial Implications

- 4.1 There are no financial implications resulting from this report.

5 Conclusions

- 5.1 The Overall Award for Holyrood North and the Commendation for The Leith Ahead Initiative, both related to the planning work of this Council, is a reflection of the Judges' view that these projects provide exemplary examples of how the planning system can deliver a quality service and quality on the ground.

6 Recommendations

- 6.1 It is recommended that the Committee notes the Planning Awards to the City Council and congratulates those staff involved in the projects.



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13.4.06

Appendices None

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Wards affected City Wide

Background Papers

1. Scottish Awards for Quality in Planning 2004 : Report of the Judges.
2. Scottish Awards for Quality in Planning 2004: Urban design award for planning students: report of the Judges
3. RTPi Planning Awards 2004, Judges' report.