

The Edinburgh Urban Design Panel
Remit, Functions, Roles and Procedures

January 2026

About the Edinburgh Urban Design Panel



Introduction

This report relates to the development of the Green Light Technology Hub East (GreenLightHub).

This is the first time that the proposals have been reviewed by the Panel.

No declarations of interest were made by any panel members in relation to the scheme.

This report should be read in conjunction with the pre-meeting papers which provide an overview, context, concept, plans, sections and 3D visualisations of the scheme.

Andrew Trigger provided an overview of the planning considerations as noted in the Planning Issues Paper.

Robert Evans and Jeremy Scott presented the proposal. Refer to the pre-meeting presentation papers.

A PAN notice has been lodged and two community consultation events have taken place. It is envisaged that a PPP Application will be lodged at the end of February 2011.

This report is the view of the Panel and is not attributable to any one individual. The Panel does not prejudice any of the organisations who are represented at the panel or the proposals at a later stage.

The Edinburgh Urban Design Panel was conceived as part of the City of Edinburgh Council's Design Initiative. It is one of a range of measures which are aimed at raising the quality of the built environment in Edinburgh and prioritising sustainable development in their independent design advice. It is an important ingredient in the pre-application process for major development proposals in the city.

Why have design reviews?

A high quality of urban design is a key objective for the Planning process. Design review also recognises design is a complex matter which can benefit from informed advice at an early stage.

What are the aims of Edinburgh's Panel?

To contribute constructive advice which can be used by design teams, planners and developers to develop proposals in a positive way, to impart advice on relevant Council policy and guidance and to provide a focus for projects significant to the city.

Who are the Panel members?

The members are drawn from a range of organisations, who operate on a voluntary basis, with particular expertise to offer to the design review process. See the stakeholders and contacts page for full details.



How does the Panel operate?

The Panel is chaired by a Senior Planning Manager of the Council, with a role to decide on projects to be presented and to facilitate discussion during meetings at the City Chambers. After introduction from the relevant Planning Officer the developer's project team gives a short presentation of their proposals and then answers a series of questions from the Panel members who, with the project team present, then identify key issues for comment, the aim being to reach a group consensus. A report is drafted and circulated to Panel members for validation before being issued to the project team within two to three weeks of the meeting. The report and presentation material are not made public until a planning application for the project is received.



From May 2020 the Panel continued its business by meetings which were held through Microsoft Teams in response to the COVID-19 pandemic restrictions on meetings. A blended/hybrid approach is proposed to continue.

What impact will the Panel have?

The Planning system has changed, placing greater emphasis on addressing issues earlier in the process. The Panel is a component of this change, contributing to improved transparency, inclusive engagement and shared exploration of design issues with key consultees.



How many reviews has the Panel carried out?

The Panel reviews around 10 development proposals per year. Additionally, it contributes advice at an early stage in the formulation and review of planning policy and guidance.

How often does it meet?

Meetings are held monthly usually on the last Thursday of the month in the City Chambers or as a virtual meeting.

Timescales for individual reviews may vary depending on the scale and complexity of the proposals considered, however, typically 1.5 hours is allowed per review.

Remit, Functions and Roles

Remit

The Edinburgh Urban Design Panel aims to promote sustainable development and raise the quality of the built environment within the City of Edinburgh Council area. In achieving this aim, the Panel will:

- 1 provide constructive and timely advice which can be used by design teams, planners and, or developers to develop their proposals in a positive way which is focused on promoting sustainable accessible development and equality, and raising the quality of the built environment;
- 2 provide advice which is well reasoned and aims to be objective;
- 3 provide design advice on development proposals of a significant or complex nature and council policy and guidance with design significance;
- 4 provide design advice on projects which would set new standards;
- 5 provide design advice on building types which, if repeated, would have a cumulative impact.

Functions

The Edinburgh Urban Design Panel will:

- 6 be provided with formatted information in advance of any meeting of the Panel to allow a full understanding of the sustainability and design issues raised by their proposals;
- 7 at the Panel meeting, be presented with the sustainability strategy and design aspects of proposals in a concise and comprehensive manner possible;
- 8 seek to reach consensus on the advice to be provided and explain the rationale for this;
- 9 agree key priorities and provide written advice which summarises the discussion held at the Panel meeting;
- 10 allow advice to be viewed by the public once a planning application has been made.

Roles

The Edinburgh Urban Design Panel members will:

- 11 provide advice which draws on their professional knowledge and / or experience;
- 12 advise their respective organisations of the Panel's views;
- 13 adhere to the principles of conduct for the Edinburgh Urban Design Panel;
- 14 expect honesty and openness from all presenters to the Panel;
- 15 expect an undertaking from presenters to consider, reflect and take into account the advice provided in the development of the design;
- 16 on a yearly basis, take part in a review of the effectiveness of the Panel and make any changes as necessary in light of this;
- 17 provide representation to the the yearly A+DS Local Authority Design Review Panel meetings.

Procedures for the Panel's membership organisations

The panel members will:

- provide constructive advice which can be used by architects, planners and, or developers to develop their proposals in a positive way;
- provide advice which is well reasoned and which aims to be objective;
- provide advice which draws on their professional competence and / or experience
- seek to reach consensus on the advice to be provided and explain the rationale for this;
- ensure they are available to comment on or approve the design review report.
- allow advice to be viewed by the public once a planning application has been made;
- as Panel members advise their respective organisations of the Panel's views;
- adhere to the Principles of Conduct for the Edinburgh Urban Design Panel.

Core members



NatureScot will:

- ensure that 1 member of their professional staff can attend each Panel meeting;
- ensure their representative will provide advice which could reasonably be expected to be reflective of the views of NatureScot with respect to landscape context and the global 'climate emergency'.



The Cockburn Association will:

- ensure that 1 member of their professional staff or board can attend each Panel meeting;
- ensure their representative will provide advice which could reasonably be expected to be reflective of the views of the Cockburn Association albeit without prejudice to any later view of the Cockburn Association.



The Edinburgh Architectural Association will:

- establish a small pool of their members from which panel members can be drawn and ensure that 3 of their members can attend each Panel meeting;
- refresh approximately a third of this pool on a yearly basis to ensure that there is a degree of continuity which is balanced by new voices being brought to the panel;
- ensure that panel members are well respected within their profession, have a track record in achieving high quality design and are able to communicate effectively and objectively their view on design matters.

ESALA

Edinburgh School of Architecture & Landscape Architecture

The Edinburgh School of Architecture and Landscape Architecture will:

- ensure that 1 member of their academic staff can attend each Panel meeting;
- use academic experience and knowledge to contribute effectively on design matters;
- while ensuring confidentiality, use general findings of reviews in teaching.

Landscape Institute
Scotland

The Landscape Institute Scotland will:

- establish a small pool of their members from which panel members can be drawn and ensure that 1 of their members can attend each Panel meeting;
- refresh approximately a third of this pool on a yearly basis to ensure that there is a degree of continuity which is balanced by new voices being brought to the Panel;
- ensure that Panel members are well respected within their profession, have a track record in achieving high quality design and are able to communicate effectively and objectively their view on design matters.

Historic Environment Scotland Àrainneachd Eachdraidheil Alba

Historic Environment Scotland will:

- ensure that 1 member of their professional staff can attend each Panel meeting;
- ensure their representative will provide advice which could reasonably be expected to be reflective of the views of Historic Scotland albeit without prejudice to any later view of Historic Scotland;
- provide advice about any relevant matters relating to the historic environment affected by development.



Police Scotland will:

- ensure that 1 member of their Police liaison service can attend each Panel meeting;
- ensure their representative will provide advice which could reasonably be expected to be reflective of the views of Police Scotland albeit without prejudice to any later view of Lothian and Borders Police;
- provide advice about any relevant matters relating to building security affected by the urban design of the development;



The RTPI in Scotland will:

- establish a small pool of their members from which a Panel member can be drawn and ensure that 1 of their members can attend each Panel meeting;
- ensure that Panel members are well respected within their profession, have a track record in achieving high quality design and are able to communicate effectively and objectively their view on design matters.



The School of Energy, Geoscience, Infrastructure and Society, Heriot Watt University will:

- ensure that 1 member of their academic staff can attend each Panel meeting;
- use academic experience and knowledge to contribute effectively on design matters;
- while ensuring confidentiality, use general findings of reviews in teaching.



The Transport Research Institute at Napier University will:

- ensure that 1 member of their academic staff can attend each Panel meeting;
- use academic experience and knowledge to contribute effectively on design matters;
- while ensuring confidentiality, use general findings of reviews in teaching.



Edinburgh World Heritage will:

- ensure that 1 member of their professional staff can attend Panel meetings;
- ensure their representative will provide advice which could reasonably be expected to be reflective of the views of Edinburgh World Heritage albeit without prejudice to any later view of Edinburgh World Heritage.

Procedures for Council Officials

The chair will:

- be a Senior Planning Manager from the Council.
- provide a facilitatory role to focus the Panel's discussion upon providing advice upon the proposals being reviewed;
- decide on the proposals to be reviewed;
- invite architects, planners and developers to present revised proposals if a subsequent review is considered likely to make a significant contribution to raising the quality of the proposals;
- advise presenters to ensure that they are providing relevant information for review;
- broadly set out the themes raised in the discussion and indicate the extent to which it is considered action is required;
- arrange external contacts with organisations, including the media;
- provide feedback on how projects have developed since being reviewed by the Panel.

The secretariat will:

- be a staff member of the Council's Planning service;
- arrange the Panel's meeting places and times;
- liaise with architects, planners and developers to establish the type of information that should be provided prior to the panel meeting and for the panel meeting;

- request presenters to provide issues papers on their proposals 8 days in advance of the panel meeting to ensure that this information can be issued to Panel members one week in advance;
- ensure a short summary of the planning issues surrounding the proposals if necessary is provided;
- prepare and issue a draft Panel report 3 working days after the Panel meeting to ensure that agreement can be reached upon it within 2 weeks of the Panel's meeting;
- Include in the written advice any declarations of interest that have been made and any decisions relating to such declarations;
- amend the draft report to reflect any additional comments made by Panel members;
- advise the chair on matters of remit, functions, roles and procedures;
- on behalf of the Panel, issue the formal advice of the panel to the architects, developers and planners;
- ensure the Panel's website is kept up to date.
- liaise with A+DS service to agree projects that will be engaged with via the Design Forum service.

Planning officials should:

- ensure architects, developers and consultant planners are made aware of the potential for their project to be reviewed;

- provide a pre meeting paper which sets out the planning context for the proposal being considered. This should highlight in particular any relevant design policies or issues, particularly where the proposal may be contrary to any policy;
- ensure that this is provided no later than 8 days in advance of the meeting;
- provide a concise presentation on the planning issues and note that this should normally last for no more than 5 minutes;
- remain for the duration of the Panel's discussion to hear the views expressed;
- encourage the design team to consider, reflect and take into account the advice provided in the development of the design;
- ensure that the Panel's report is added to the public record of the planning application;
- Set out how the Panel's comments have been addressed in any relevant planning report.

Procedures for presenters

To ensure that Panel members have a full understanding of the sustainability strategy and design issues raised by their proposals, architects, consultant planners and developers should:

- provide a concise presentation in a digital format which focuses on the rationale for the development, including its design concept and sustainability strategy. This should be set out in accordance with the pro forma and be around **10 minutes**;
 - provide a summary of the project information including, names of clients, consultants, key players and consultees, estimated project cost and procurement method, and size of site;
 - ensure that this visual and written information is provided no later than 8 days in advance of the meeting;
 - ensure / encourage their clients to attend Panel reviews;
 - remain for the duration of the Panel's discussion to hear the views expressed;
 - consider, reflect and take into account the advice provided in the development of the design;
- provide a statement with the planning application on how the advice provided by the Panel has been addressed.

Virtual Meetings

When the Panel holds a virtual meeting, the following procedures will apply:

Meetings

Meetings will be held virtually through Microsoft TEAMS.

Meetings will be held monthly and generally the last Wednesday of each month.

The timescale for an individual review will be around 1 hour however one and a half hours will be allocated to each meeting to accommodate the virtual process.

Microsoft TEAMS Connection

If a presenter's internet connection drops during the meeting, the review will continue without interruption. The Panel's report will be based on the information provided by all Panel members.

If a Panel member's connection drops during the meeting, the review will continue without interruption. The Panel member may email a brief summary of comments to the chair and secretariat, for including in the draft report. Comments must be supplied no later than 5.30 pm on the day of the meeting.

If the chair's connection drops, his/her role in facilitating the meeting will be performed by one

of the design officers. Similarly, if a planning case officer's connection drops, a design officer will fulfil his/her contribution to the meeting.

Report

A draft report will be circulated to the Panel for comment within two days of the meeting. The final report will be issued to the presenting team two weeks after the meeting.

The Chair

The meetings will be chaired by a senior planning manager of the council. The chair's role will be to facilitate and focus Panel discussion on providing advice on proposals under review.

Panel members

Organisations are asked to confirm attendees in advance, ideally no later than 10 days before the Panel meeting.

Presentation material will be emailed to attendees 8 days before the meeting. It is noted that given the current emergency Panel members will not be available to visit a site before a meeting.

To minimise potential shortcomings of the virtual meeting Panel members are asked to:

- Familiarise themselves thoroughly with presentation material in advance;

- Ensure that during the meeting, questions addressed to presenters are targeted and concise.

Panel members are asked to comment within a week of receiving the draft report to allow it to be finalised and issued to the presenters.

The secretariat

A council planning officer will prepare and circulate a draft Panel report within two working days of the meeting to ensure that agreement can be reached on the final version within two weeks.

Planning officials:

A council planning officer will provide a pre-meeting paper which sets out the planning context for the proposal being considered. This should highlight in particular any relevant design policies or issues, particularly where the proposal may be contrary to any policy. The paper should be provided no later than 8 days in advance of the Panel meeting.

At the meeting, the council planning case officer will provide a concise presentation on the planning issues, noting this should normally last no more than 5 minutes.

Procedure for presenters

The number of presenters at the Microsoft TEAMS meeting should be limited to a maximum of three.

To minimise potential shortcomings of the virtual meeting, presenters are asked to:

- Limit presentation time to five minutes, focused on communicating the rationale for the design concept and sustainability strategy (bearing in mind that the Panel will already be familiar with the presentation material).
- Respond concisely to Panel members' questions and comments.

To ensure that Panel members have a full understanding of the design issues raised by their proposals, architects, consultant planners and developers should:

- Provide a concise presentation in a digital format which focuses on the rationale for the design including its concept and sustainability strategy and be set out in accordance with the pro forma. Ensure that this visual and written information is provided no later than 8 days in advance of the meeting;

- Ensure / encourage their clients to take part in the Microsoft TEAMS meeting;
- Remain for the duration of the Panel's discussion to hear the views expressed.

Definitions

Significant Development: This is considered to be development which is significant because of its scale or location. For example a tenement infill in the city centre or on an arterial route may be considered major because of its prominence whereas a development of a similar scale in an industrial area may not. Significant development may also be that which involves a significant departure from the development plan / finalised plan or that which raises issues not adequately covered by the development plan / finalised plan. If the degree of public interest in a proposal is likely to be substantial, this would indicate that the proposal would be significant. Discretion will be used by the secretariat in selecting such proposals for review.

Complex Development: This is considered to be development which has complex issues surrounding it such sensitivity due to location or a complex programme of functional requirements, for example a school. Discretion will be used by the secretariat in selecting such proposals for review.

Projects which set new standards: These are considered to include projects which create a new typology of building or architecture or one which is unusual to the Edinburgh context. Discretion will be used by the secretariat in selecting such proposals for review.

Building types which, if repeated, would have a cumulative impact: These are considered to include projects which, individually may not have a significant impact on the quality of the built environment, however if large numbers of them are built could have a significant impact.