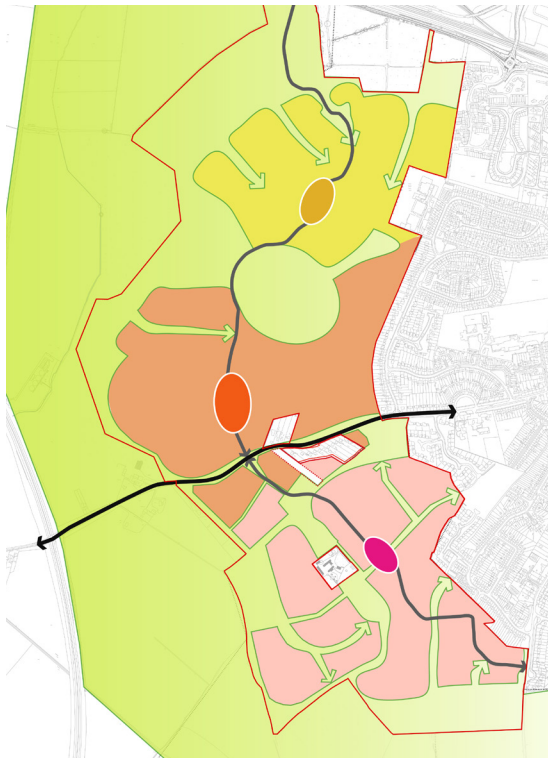


How to use placemaking to speed up the planning process

Design is one of the most emotive aspects of many major planning applications, with local opinion and local authority decision makers closely scrutinising the both the quality of plans being put forward and their impact on the surrounding area.

Recognising this challenge and drawing on a placemaking approach from the start of a scheme's evolution is often overlooked. But focussing on design, and how good public spaces can benefit a project's end-users, is a very effective way of making the planning process easier for all concerned.

“Early investment into design, placemaking and community engagement will help de-risk a scheme”



Great Western Park - Concept Plan

1 Embrace best practice

From the very start, each scheme's design needs to be considered in parallel to its commercial ambitions. A placemaking approach means investing time in the development of an appropriate layout, and considering how its design could enrich the local – and wider – communities. Demonstrating a beneficial impact for end-users and a lasting legacy will show that the development is right for the area and the people who live and work there – and should therefore be brought forward.

2 Balance technical work with high quality design

Build a team of experienced technical advisors, as well as designers and planners, and assign the right level of importance to technical constraints throughout the planning process. Get to know and understand the site and its context well so that technical issues, such as anomalies within ground surveying reports, can be forecast, managed and incorporated into final high quality designs.

3 Reach out

While communities are often sceptical of development, concerns can often be alleviated by regular communication and plans are more likely to avoid obstacles if stakeholders feel they are informed. There are often various stakeholder groups within a community too. Identify them very early on and communicate with them in a way that shows you value their views. Open days with presentations and Q&A sessions do take time, but they enable the community to feel part of the planning process and buy in to the final development.

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4 Listen

Use softer skills to read the local mood and distinguish between immovable elements of your plans and areas where there is flexibility to adapt to local opinion. For example, if the community prefer a green space in an opposite corner of the scheme and this has no real impact on its viability, change the design. Ensuring communities feel they have had an impact on the design of a scheme will generate further support.

5 Make your case

Rather than simply describing and justifying an application, detailed applications that highlight the positive impacts of a scheme and benefits for end users gain greater support. At the same time, documenting the process of a design-led approach and the thinking behind the scheme's concept demonstrates a regard for placemaking and best practice that is welcomed by local authorities when deciding whether to grant consent.



Great Western Park - Illustrative masterplan

6 Engage with the local authority

Explain clearly the scheme's benefits in terms of context, community and sustainability, as well as its impacts. Demonstrate that the scheme is well-designed and centres on more than commercial requirements, such as the development of new schools and/or community centres. Engage the planning officer in the concept, options and details of the scheme and take their views into account as the scheme evolves.

7 Project manage

Develop a timeline with plenty of initial investment to help the planning programme remain on course with fewer surprises. Procurement, contract management and contract administration are of course vital, but a high level of design expertise needs to be retained throughout to ensure that the scheme going forward to planning is of the right quality for Councils to approve. Allow time for internal and external review stages to ensure stakeholders are engaged and have the information they need, and be prepared to show how you have responded to any concerns.

Further information

Click link below to find out more:

- Great Western Park
- Shorncliffe Garrison

Contact

Katja Stille is an urban designer specialising in large scale projects and detailed architectural design and research, including work on design coding that has helped shape government guidance to the industry. Working with public sector bodies, private landowners and their teams, she develops masterplans and development frameworks, and undertakes characterisation studies, case studies and urban design appraisals. At the heart of all her work is a focus on strategic definition and retaining good design and placemaking principles.



e: katja.stille@tiballds.co.uk
t: 020 7089 2134

“A good placemaking approach can make the difference between permission and refusal.”

“Commercial needs must be balanced with community and sustainability benefits.”