

Part 1

An introduction to Local Design Review in South Australia

Local
Design
Review

Best
Practice
Guide

OFFICE FOR
DESIGN+
ARCHITECTURE SA

Welcome

Thank you for your interest in Design Review and supporting good design.

Good design helps to improve the quality of our built environments and provides lasting community benefits.

Design Review is a tried and tested approach to support good design that fosters creative thinking and innovation. The independent, expert and timely nature of Design Review adds value to development proposals and increases project certainty for the benefit of clients and councils.

The Local Design Review Scheme for South Australia (the Scheme) provides the opportunity for councils to offer Design Review for local projects of various sizes and types, as determined by a council.

This Guide supports users of the Scheme by providing useful information, templates and other resources to deliver best practice Design Review. The Guide simplifies the process from start to finish, including the recruitment of suitable design experts, delivering Design Review and providing design advice.

The Office for Design and Architecture SA (ODASA) has developed this Guide with valuable input from council staff. The Guide is also informed by South Australia's nationally recognised State Design Review Program established in 2011.

We look forward to working with local councils and the design sector to support good design across our state and express our gratitude to everyone who has helped contribute to the Scheme and this Guide.

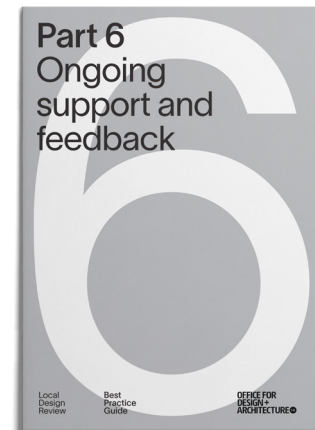
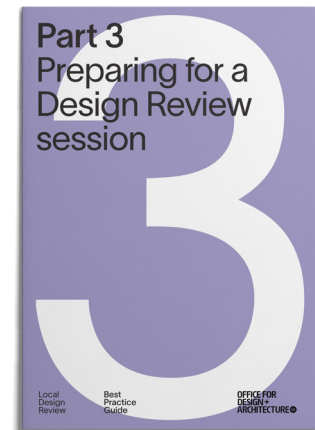
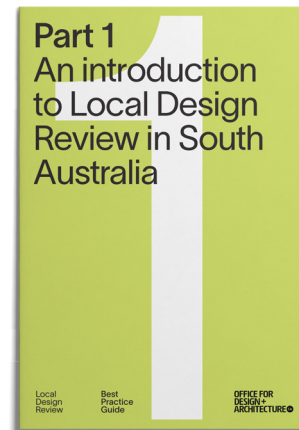


Kirsteen Mackay
South Australian Government Architect



Local Design Review Best Practice Guide

A six-part Guide to support users of the Local Design Review Scheme.



Topics covered in this part:

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Every new development
has the potential to
improve our quality of
life, attract investment
and reduce our impact
on the environment.

Why design quality matters

Each year planners and assessment authorities across the state see high volumes of new development proposals that all have the potential to support high-quality design and contribute positively to our built environments.

Design quality not only relates to the 'look and feel' of buildings and places, but also to how successfully they meet the needs of the people who use and experience them. High-quality design helps to make buildings and places better for people, our environment and the economy.

There is comprehensive academic and scientific research available that explores the many benefits of well-designed places and the negative effects poor design can have on our lives.^{1 2 3}

1. Office of the Victorian Government Architect, *The Case for Good Design: a guide for government*, 2019, Melbourne.
2. Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment (CABE), *The Value of Good Design*, 2002, London.
3. Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment (CABE), *The Cost of Bad Design*, 2006, London.

This research demonstrates that good design can:

- support public health, wellbeing, and safety
- improve environmental quality and social connectedness
- reduce operating, maintenance and adaptation costs
- increase productivity.

As the links between design, human behaviour and health are better understood, we have a responsibility to use this evidence to inform our decision making about the shape and future of our cities, buildings and communities.



Third Avenue Residential Development
Studio Nine Architects
Image by Sam Noonan

Participated in two State Design Review sessions, 2018.

Urban infill projects, like Third Avenue, are unique opportunities to deliver high-quality outcomes that positively contribute to local character, integrate with and add value to the existing surroundings, and support community wellbeing.



Legislative and policy context

The South Australian planning system is underpinned by the *Planning, Development and Infrastructure Act 2016* (the Act).

Section 14 of the Act identifies high-quality design as one of the seven principles of good planning.

By declaring the importance of design quality in legislation, the planning system must support high-quality design outcomes.

State Planning Policies

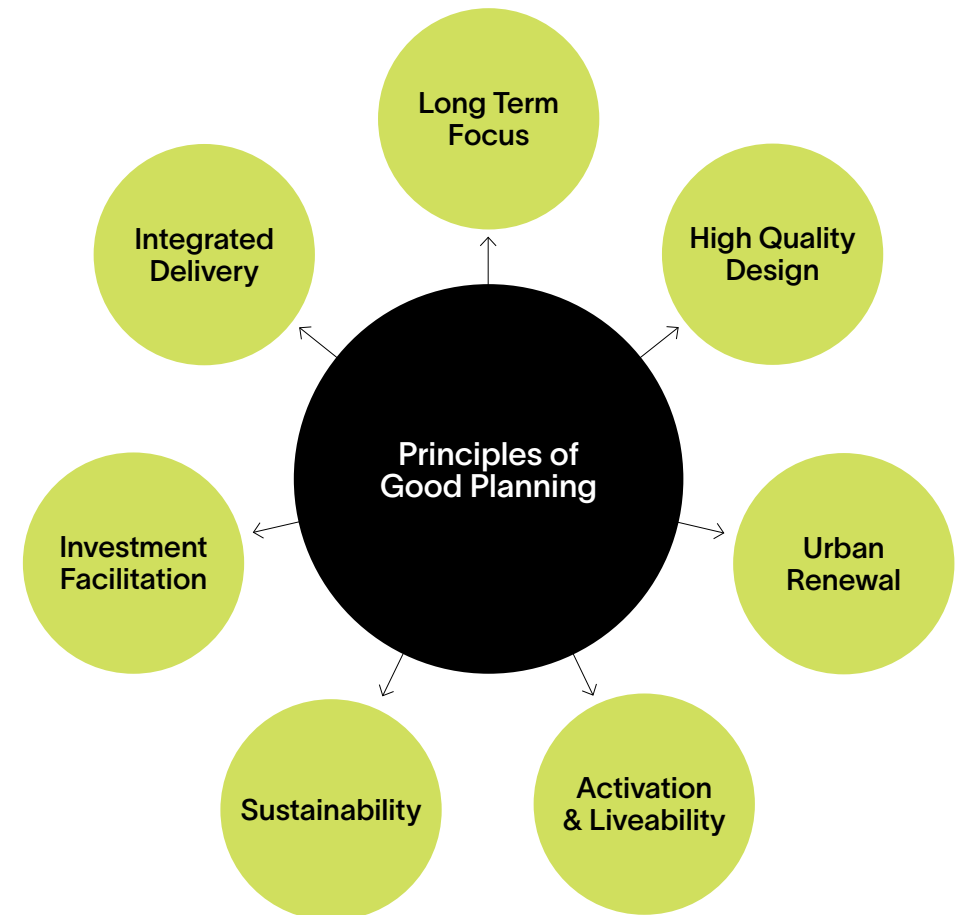
The State Planning Policies outline the high-level planning priorities for the state and are the highest order planning instrument within the planning system.

The Local Design Review Scheme provides for the practical application of several objectives and policies from the State Planning Policies, specifically State Planning Policy Two called 'Design Quality', including:

- 2.1 Promote best practice in the design of buildings, places and the public realm by applying the Principles of Good Design.

- 2.4 Design advice should be obtained early in the planning process for complex developments and utilise consistent and credible processes (such as Design Review) to ensure improved outcomes.
- 2.6 Maximise opportunities for the Principles of Good Design and community engagement to inform future policy creation and improve design outcomes.
- 2.7 Promote a culture of good design to foster creative thinking, innovation and effective design processes within the planning industry, built environment professions and general public.
- 2.9 Respect the characteristics and identities of different neighbourhoods, suburbs and precincts by ensuring development considers existing and desired future context of a place.

↓
Seven Principles of Good Planning from section 14 of the *Planning, Development and Infrastructure Act 2016*.



Principles of Good Design

The visual appeal of a building or place is one of the most immediate factors we respond to.

While appearance is an important consideration, our response to it—positive or negative—can be subjective and not informed by overall functionality or performance.

South Australia's Principles of Good Design aim to help everyone consider the design of a development holistically and objectively, going beyond appearance.

The Principles of Good Design are embedded in the State Planning Policies for South Australia. This means the Principles must be given effect through the planning system to support informed decision-making.

- 1 → Context
- 2 → Inclusive
- 3 → Durable
- 4 → Value
- 5 → Performance
- 6 → Sustainable

Context

Good design is *contextual* because it responds to the surrounding environment, and contributes to the existing quality and future character of a place.

Things to consider:

- contribute to desired character and enhance surrounding features, particularly at street level
- enhance and complement street appearance through landscaping, lighting, vegetation, paths and open space
- manage overlooking and overshadowing from taller to lower buildings
- effectively transition from low-rise to higher rise
- respect Aboriginal and other diverse cultures and acknowledge their ongoing connections through meaningful and collaborative design
- support the conservation of heritage places on and adjacent to the site.

Inclusive

Good design is *inclusive* and universal because it creates places for everyone to use and enjoy, by optimising social opportunity and equitable access.

Things to consider:

- ensure buildings and the public realm are universally accessible and usable to people of all ages and abilities
- link developments with movement networks, prioritising people and sustainable movement over private vehicles
- prioritise opportunities for social interaction and connections between people, services, employment and nature
- support digital inclusion by ensuring technologies are accessible.

Durable

Good design is *durable* because it creates buildings and places that are fit-for-purpose, adaptable and long lasting.

Things to consider:

- ensure buildings and public spaces are adaptable to support the changing needs of people over time, such as ageing in place and adaptive reuse
- use quality materials and finishes that are made to last
- ensure development can withstand local conditions, such as microclimate, and proximity to the coast and waterbodies.

Value

Good design adds *value* by creating desirable places that promote community and local investment, as well as enhancing social and cultural value.

Things to consider:

- positively contribute to the sense of place and community pride
- support local investment, through higher property values and rental returns
- contribute to streets and neighbourhoods that people enjoy and want to visit
- ensure affordable housing has good amenity and positively contributes to the local community.

Performance

Good design *performs* well because it realises the project potential for the benefit of all users and the broader community.

Things to consider:

- enhance actual and perceived safety, reduce crime and increase security
- reduce operating costs by lowering energy and water consumption, including appropriate insulation and managing access to sunlight and natural ventilation
- effectively balance size, space, storage and access
- support active lifestyles, physical and mental wellbeing
- reduce overall maintenance time and costs.

Sustainable

Good design is *sustainable* because it is environmentally responsible and supports long-term economic productivity, health and well-being.

Things to consider:

- incorporate improved water and stormwater management
- maximise opportunities for appropriate waste management and recycling
- include productive gardens and sufficient deep soil spaces for planting trees
- utilise renewable energy where possible, such as solar.

↓
Salisbury Community Hub and Civic Centre
 Hassell with Baukultur
 Images by Lillie Thompson

Participated in two State Design Review sessions, 2017.



Design Review can help councils improve the overall design quality of their own development projects, such as civic buildings and public realm upgrades. The independence of the design panel can also help councils make informed and objective decisions, ensure value for money, and build public confidence in council's design process, decision making and the project outcome.

This project was the catalyst for the revitalisation of the Salisbury city centre. Since opening in November 2019, key outcomes include:

- 40% increase in overall visitation*
- 106% increase in public participation
- 80% increase in council led education
- 15% increase in average attendance

—City of Salisbury, 2022

**Overall visitation recorded in 2020.*



Design Review in South Australia

Design Review in South Australia is a pre-lodgement service that supports high-quality design outcomes, improves access to independent design expertise and assists with informed decision-making during development assessment.

During Design Review, an independent panel of built environment experts (such as architects, landscape architects and urban designers) review the design quality of a development proposal before it is lodged for assessment. The role of a panel is not to redesign proposals, but rather to identify issues and challenges and discuss opportunities to encourage high-quality design.

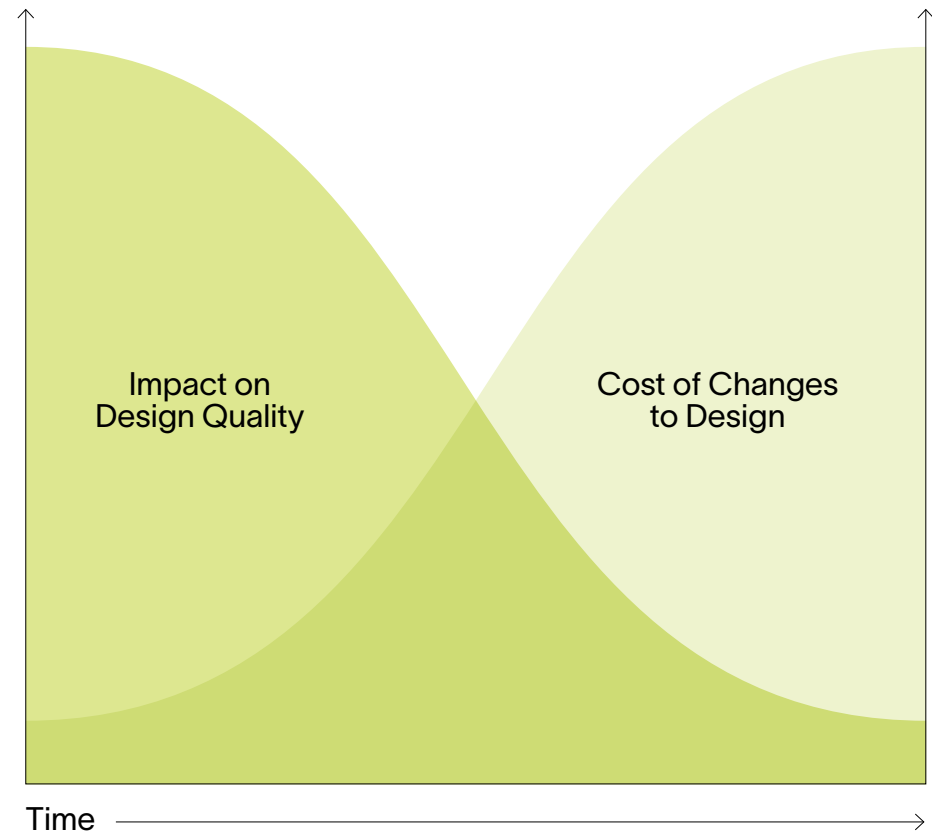
Design Review provides proponents with the opportunity to obtain independent design advice from a panel to assist with design development. The design advice is then provided to the relevant authority for consideration during development assessment.

Design Review is most effective when undertaken early in the planning and design process to effect positive change. As the adjacent diagram illustrates, the ability to impact and improve the design quality of a development proposal becomes more difficult and expensive as the project progresses.

State Design Review has operated successfully in South Australia since 2011 and is currently available to larger-scale development proposals assessed by the State Commission Assessment Panel that are referred to the South Australian Government Architect.



Design Review is most effective when undertaken early.



Local Design Review Scheme

The Local Design Review Scheme for South Australia (the Scheme) was established under section 121 of the Act.

The Scheme sets out the consistent state-wide approach for councils who wish to provide Design Review in their area and aims to:

- support development that demonstrates high-quality design
- improve access to independent and expert design advice early in the planning and design process
- support consistent and informed planning decisions
- facilitate collaboration between allied professionals
- support South Australia's planning system to meet the objects of the Act in section 12, including to—
 - support and enhance the State's liveability and prosperity in ways that are ecologically sustainable and meet the needs and expectations, and reflect the diversity, of the State's communities by creating an effective, efficient and enabling planning system

- promote certainty for people and bodies proposing to undertake development while also providing scope for innovation
- promote high standards for the built environment through an emphasis on design quality in policies, processes and practices, including by providing for policies and principles that support or promote universal design for the benefit of people with differing needs and capabilities
- demonstrate practical application of the Principles of Good Planning identified in section 14 of the Act, particularly—
 - high-quality design
 - activation and liveability
 - sustainability.

The Scheme was prepared by ODASA in close collaboration with council staff from across the state, representatives from peak industry bodies, the State Planning Commission and interstate government agencies with experience in Design Review.

This Guide is designed to be read in conjunction with the Scheme, which is available on the PlanSA portal: <http://plan.sa.gov.au>

Principles of Design Review

It is important that Design Review is carried out using a robust process that offers consistently high standards in the quality of advice. Local Design Review is informed by the following Principles:

a → Independent

Design Review should be conducted by people who are not connected with the proponent or decision-makers to avoid any conflicts of interest.

b → Expert

Design Review should be carried out by appropriately experienced design experts who have training in delivering constructive feedback.

c → Multidisciplinary

Design Review should combine the perspectives of specialist experts, including architects, landscape architects and urban designers, with consideration of planning matters to provide a complete and rounded assessment.

d → Accountable

A design panel and its advice should be clearly seen to be supporting the public's interest.

e → Transparent

Information about Design Review, panel membership, funding and governance should be available to the public.

f → Timely

Design Review should take place as early in the design process as possible to effect positive change during design development and avoid reworking.

g → Advisory

A design panel should not make decisions or give direction—it offers impartial advice and recommendations to the proponent and relevant authority.

h → Objective

Design Review should appraise development proposals according to reasoned and objective principles, rather than stylistic tastes or subjective opinion.

i → Accessible

The recommendations arising from Design Review should be expressed in terms that design teams, decision-makers and proponents can clearly understand and apply.

Benefits of Design Review

Offering Design Review sends a strong public message that design quality matters.

Design Review provides a respected and tested approach to support good design, respond positively to local character, assist with improving planning policy, and helps to avoid the negative and long-lasting impacts of poor design.

Additional benefits include:

- promoting collaboration between council staff, allied professionals and developers to help build certainty and confidence in the approvals process
- supporting developers and design teams to prioritise design quality and produce buildings and places that provide lasting community benefits
- providing access to independent expertise that may not be readily available during development assessment
- encouraging design innovation that may appropriately challenge planning parameters.

Confidently and objectively supporting high-quality outcomes requires access to independent design expertise. The Local Design Review Scheme provides a trusted method of building this capacity.

↓ Andrew Lefort Former Manager Statutory Planning City of Cockburn (WA)

All applications that have been through the Cockburn Central Town Centre (CCTC) and Cockburn Central West (CCW) Development WA design review process were able to meet criteria—or satisfy the objectives—of the CCTC Design Guidelines prior to consideration by the Development Assessment Panel, so were determined in the relevant statutory timeframes.

To date, no application that has been through these design review processes has been deferred by the Development Assessment Panel, required an extension to processing time by the City or proponent, or been the subject of an appeal in the State Administrative Tribunal.

The City of Cockburn attribute this to a number of factors, including the design review process.

↓ Karen Abey Manager Development Appraisal City of Hobart (Tas)

The Hobart City Council highly values the advice from our Urban Design Advisory Panel on significant planning proposals.

The independent Panel includes experts in the fields of architecture, urban design and landscape architecture. We encourage applicants to attend a Panel meeting before they lodge an application so that they can proceed with confidence, having had early feedback from the Panel about their proposal both on issues within the planning scheme and also on broader design issues. This also allows Council officers to become familiar with a project early and to help facilitate a smooth application process.

The advice to the Council on formal planning applications allows the Elected Members to understand the design issues when they are assessing an application, including how any heritage aspects of a proposal can be protected and celebrated.

Benefits of Design Review



David Homburg
Director
Baukultur (SA)

We have found that Design Review inevitably adds value to projects, and has led to better outcomes for both clients and the community.

Design Review is especially valuable for projects whose merits do not neatly fit the more prescriptive requirements of the planning system—we can now have more nuanced discussions about the qualities of a project, and whether those qualities meet the intent of planning requirements.

Design Review is our preferred assessment pathway.



Jeremy McLeod
Design Director
Breathe Architecture (Vic)

As an architect with 25 years experience, I found the critique in the Design Review sessions robust and direct, however always respectful. I was given an opportunity to discuss design decisions with the Panel, and I was given the opportunity through consequent Panel meetings to revise designs to meet their expectations. The design team at Breathe found the Design Review process rigorous and rewarding. It is our belief that the Design Review Panel demanded excellence from us and pushed us to make the building and our urban response better.



Sharon Peacock
Projects Research Officer
City of Rockingham (WA)

Since inception in February 2018, the City of Rockingham Design Review Panel (DRP) has assessed 15 pre-lodgement and 2 post lodgement proposals.

The City is encouraged by positive feedback provided by proponents who have participated in the DRP process and who have applied many of the panel comments into their final design resulting in positive design quality and built form improvements.

City officers participating in the DRP meeting process have enhanced their knowledge and awareness of key design principles which can then be applied to the assessment of proposals that do not fall within the criteria for a DRP assessment.

Going forward, it is anticipated that proponents will be responsive to the City's objectives to encourage and promote good built form outcomes such that applications will have already integrated key design principles and be of the highest standard prior to lodgement.

The overwhelming feedback from proponents, City officers and consultants has been very encouraging and positive.



Plant 4 Bowden

Ashley Halliday Architects
and Arco Architecture and Interior Design
Image by Sam Noonan



The Bowden Design Review Panel was established in 2011 to oversee the architectural quality of all built form within the Bowden community, and to ensure that this development met rigorous standards in innovation, sustainability and safety.

Local Design Review process

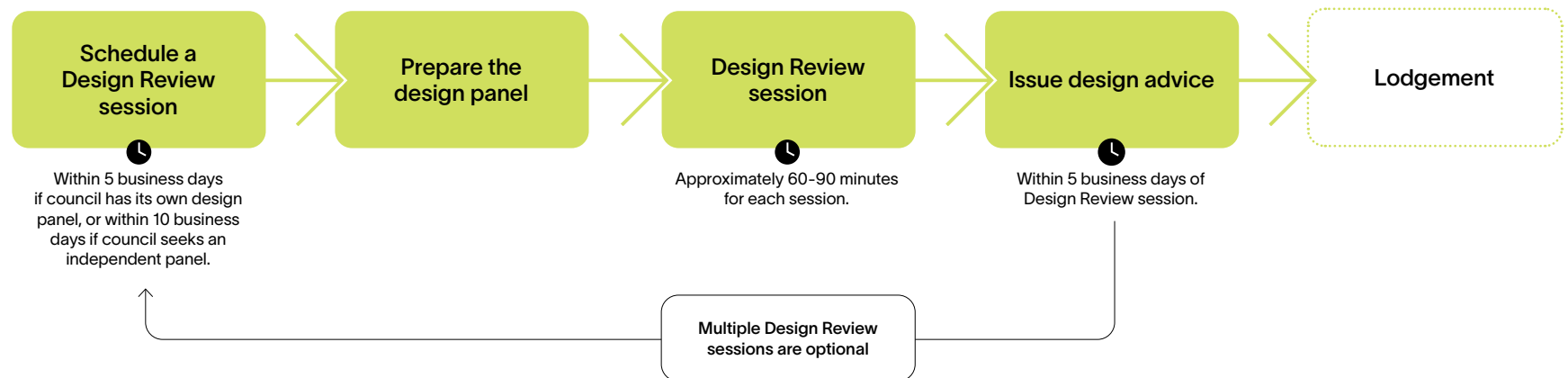
Getting started

The following steps occur upon registration and then only as required.



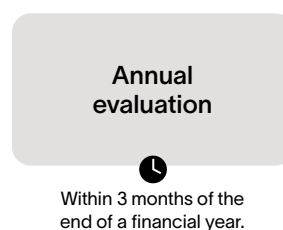
Design Review

Council completes the following steps for each valid Design Review application.



Continuous improvement

The following step is an annual process. ODASA welcomes general feedback at any time.



i All templates that are required to successfully deliver Design Review are provided throughout this Guide and in digital format.

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