

05 March 2010

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Our ref: CSE-19823

Dear Brian

**Lewisham Core Strategy proposed submission version**

**Your Ref: n/a**

Thank you for consulting the Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment (CABE).

Unfortunately, due to limited resources, we are unable to comment on this document. However we would like to make some general comments which you should consider.

A good spatial plan is essential to achieving high quality places and good design. CABE believes that getting the local development framework core strategies right is one of the most important tasks planners are undertaking.

We have run workshops with over 65 local planning authorities to look at how design is being embedded in core strategy documents, which form part of the local development framework. The workshops offer local authorities independent informal advice from an expert panel and allowed us to identify the strengths and weaknesses of current approaches to spatial planning and how design, functionality and space are dealt with in core strategy documents.

Three key messages for local planning authorities preparing core strategies have emerged from our workshops. These are now embedded within a CABE publication called ***Planning for places: delivering good design through core strategies***.

This publication is available to download from the CABE website

[www.cabe.org.uk/publications/planning-for-places](http://www.cabe.org.uk/publications/planning-for-places)

The three key messages are also applicable to other LDF documents and you should keep these in mind when preparing other Development Plan Documents and Supplementary Planning Documents:

### **Tell the story**

A good core strategy needs to tell the story of the place, explain how it works and highlight its qualities and distinguishing features. Telling the story helps everyone understand how the qualities of the place have shaped the strategy and its priorities for future quality. For more information about telling the story, please refer to the CABE website: [www.cabe.org.uk/planning/core-strategies/tell-the-story](http://www.cabe.org.uk/planning/core-strategies/tell-the-story)



### **Set the agenda**

Use the core strategy to say what is wanted for the area, express aspirations and be proactive and positive about the future of the place and say how this will be achieved. Set out what is expected in terms of design quality and where necessary provide links to the relevant development plan documents or supplementary planning documents. For more information about setting the agenda, please refer to the CABE website: [www.cabe.org.uk/planning/core-strategies/set-the-agenda](http://www.cabe.org.uk/planning/core-strategies/set-the-agenda)

### **Say it clearly**

Make the core strategy relevant and understandable to a wide audience. Use diagrams to inform the text and communicate the strategy and show what quality of place means. For more information about saying it clearly, please refer to the CABE website: [www.cabe.org.uk/planning/core-strategies/say-it-clearly](http://www.cabe.org.uk/planning/core-strategies/say-it-clearly)

It is also important that there is a clear priority for design quality and place-making objectives in the core strategy, setting out the key principles. This needs to be explicit so that it cannot be challenged when applications are being determined.

We would also like to respond by drawing your attention the following CABE Guidance that you might find useful:

- *Making design policy work: How to deliver good design through your local development framework*
- *Protecting Design Quality in Planning*
- *Creating Successful Masterplans – a guide for clients and Design Reviewed Masterplans*
- *By Design: urban design in the planning system towards better practice* (published by DETR)

These, and other publications, are available from our website [www.cabe.org.uk](http://www.cabe.org.uk)

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Sarah Burgess', with a flourish at the end.

Sarah Burgess  
**Senior advisor**



## KEY QUESTIONS – CORE STRATEGY WORKSHOP

### Questions to think about when telling the story

- Is there a clear description of the special character of a place and how it functions?
- Does it recognise the choices facing an area?
- Does it express the role the place plays in the sub-region and region?
- Who lives there and why?
- Is it clear how the physical, economic, environmental and social influences have shaped the place?
- Does the vision set out what the place will be like and reflect the characteristics and issues of the area?



### Questions to think about when setting the agenda

- What are the core principles behind the strategy?
- Are the priorities clear and have the tough decisions been made?
- Does the strategy clearly set out what you want for an area - and where, when and how you want it?
- Is it clear that quality of place is a priority?
- Is the emphasis on neighbourhoods rather than housing numbers?
- What sort of lifestyle will communities have?
- What are the expectations for development?
- Could developers identify what is wanted and where? Has the strategy considered the implications of change and how that change will be managed?
- Are there links in the core strategy to other local development documents?
- Is there backing from the rest of the authority, the local strategic partnership and other key partners?
- Have examples of other places that could inspire change locally been identified?
- Does the strategy set out the brief for areas that need further detailed analysis?

### Questions to think about when saying it clearly

- Does the document use plain English?
- Is the strategy selective in its content?
- Are maps, diagrams and photos used to tell the story of the place, explain the strategy or show benchmarks?
- Are the issues set out and the response to them shown clearly?

- Has the strategy been expressed at different spatial scales so that its implications are understood at the neighbourhood, town, city, sub-regional and regional level?

