Urban Maestro

New governance strategies
for Urban Design

Marketizing Design Review

analysis of design review practices
across London (UK)

Matthew Carmona
Professor of Planning
and Urban Design,
University College London

www.matthew-carmona.com

UN@HABITAT
UNITED NATIONS HUMAN SETTLEMENTS PROGRAMME

BOUWMEESTERMAITREARCHITECTE

↑UCL

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. SUMMARY

This case study explores the marketization of design review in England, a tool for design governance that prior to 2011 had almost exclusively been within the purview of the state (both the national and local governments). This is no longer the case, but neither is it the case that the involvement of the market in the delivery of such services has inevitably undermined their public interest *raison d'être*. This case offers insight into a rare, and—according to those involved— ultimately successful example of marketization in design governance services, albeit one with potentially limited potential for transferability elsewhere given the necessary conditions for such a viable market to take root.

2. CONTEXT AND ADMINISTRATION

Design review is a peer review process for the design of built environment projects. Globally it is an increasingly prominent tool in the design governance toolbox where it is typically offered as a public service. The 'modernisation' of public services has been much written about as a key tenet of the neoliberal state. Such processes typically encompass the withdrawal of the state, the commodification of services, the introduction of competition and market mechanisms, and the general embedding of business interests into previous state functions. In England, between 2011 and 2018, design review was subject to such a change. It moved from a publicly funded service that had been dominated – although not exclusively delivered – by a single national agency, the Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment (CABE), to a (typically) privately funded activity that a diverse group of market providers compete to deliver.

2.1. The national growth in design review

The sources of evidence on which this case study is based (see references) include a national survey of practice, conducted in early 2017 across the 374 local planning authorities in England. This survey revealed that the percentage of those regularly using design review services had increased to 64%, up from around 50% when CABE had been wound up, suggesting that the marketization of design review had led to an increase in uptake, or at least had not significantly undermined the upward

trend set in motion between 1999 and 2011. The headline figures were not, however, the whole story, as the survey also revealed a large differential in the level of use of the tool with only 19% of authorities using a panel regularly (monthly or quarterly), a further 37% occasionally, and the remaining authorities only very rarely.

Among those using the panel occasionally or very rarely, the most common explanation for this pattern of use was that only large or unusual planning applications were subject to design review. Some commented that they expected the developer to organize the review panel, and did not see it as their responsibility, while others stated that they would only undertake a design review if the applicant was willing. For these authorities, there was a noticeable tendency to look to the development community to take the lead in these decisions indicating that (in such cases) an almost complete abdication to the market had occurred.

Among the reasons for not using a panel at all, cost was most frequently mentioned – despite developers being liable for the costs of a design review – together with worries about delaying the development process and uncertainty over the accountability of external panels. The consensus among those who commented suggested that, given the budget and greater clarity as regards the process of design review and its impact on the overall planning process, more local authorities would welcome the opportunity to use a design review panel. Ad hoc evidence gathered since the survey suggests that the spread of design review has continued on an upward trajectory.

When asked about how panels were managed, a third of respondents revealed that they used an internally managed panel (by the local authority itself), whilst just over a third used an externally managed panel (from one of the market providers). Geographically, local design review panels were less common outside the South East, South West and London, and virtually absent in the East of England. This geographical spread suggested that, where successful panels have been established, the practice of using design review quickly spreads to neighbouring authorities, thus establishing clusters of use. This was most obvious in London where the greatest density of panels can be found, with (in 2020) 26 of London's 33 Boroughs using design review either regularly or on an ad hoc basis.

Overall, despite almost a decade of a gradually growing market for design review services, a continued ignorance about how design review might be used and paid for is still apparent within local government. Clearly, there is still some room for the market to grow and mature (even in London), and there is definitely room for the market players to better communicate their products and the value they can add. However, there has also been a fragmentation of the market coupled with a lack of coordination across the sector to try and build the total market for these services.

2.2. A maturing market

In February 2016, this was also the message from the first ever Parliamentary Select Committee on National Policy for the Built Environment, a six-month-long enquiry held within the House of Lords to scrutinise policy making related to the built environment. Whilst the Select Committee did not question the move of key design governance services into the market, they argued that provision was often inconsistent and disjointed with an insufficient level of activity to justify a wider investment by the sector in design review. The recommended solution was more government action, this time to mandate design reviews for all 'major' planning applications (residential sites of over 0.5 hectares or 10 units or sites of over 1 hectare or 1000 sq metres of floorspace for all other uses) with the aim of driving up the volume and ultimately the quality of such activities, and as a means to encourage the market to mature.

Government did not heed the call, and in 2018, their revised National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) rolled back earlier provisions in the 2012 NPPF by dropping the all-important statement that: "Local planning authorities should have local design review arrangements in place" (see below). Instead, they included the blander assertion that "Local planning authorities should ensure that they have access to, and make appropriate use of, tools and processes for assessing and improving the design of development" (including "review arrangements"). The impact of this move on the still immature market has yet to be seen.

3. OBJECTIVES

The immediate function of design review is to improve the design quality of individual development schemes by providing advice from a pool of experts whose joint experience can be tapped into. In England, this typically occurs during the planning process. This brings a breadth and depth of experience that may not be available to the project team or to the planning authority, not least on more specialist areas such as inclusion, heritage or sustainability. It can help to broaden discussions about projects and draw attention to the bigger picture within which developments sit.

The distinguishing feature of design review in England is that it provides this advice in an independent manner from experts unconnected to the schemes under review and provides that advice to planners and others who will need to make decisions as part of formal regulatory processes. Design review itself is non-statutory and informal; at its most basic it can provide a 'crit' of development proposals which can then be refined and amended in light of the advice, but more sophisticated processes can also act in educational, facilitative and mediation capacities, helping to bring parties together to understand how outcomes can be achieved that are 'optimum' for all. Of course, like any tool, not all design processes are ideal and can be run badly; design review can bring confusion, discord and delay as well.

4. THE TOOL / INITIATIVE: DETAILED DESCRIPTION

The relative vibrancy of this new market in design review services varies substantially across the country. In the North East of England, for example, just one organisation – NEDRES – provides a design review service to the market, whilst in the South West the South West Design Review Panel (managed by Creating Excellence, a not-for-profit) provides a regional service, Cornwall County Council maintains its own panel, the Architecture Centre, Bristol runs the city's design review panel, and a private consortium, the Design Review Panel, operates throughout Devon and Somerset to deliver, according to their own publicity, "a cost effective" alternative.

4.1. Independence and the commercial imperative

A key issue is how the commercialisation of services affects the essential relationship between the providers and recipients of design review, and in particular, how it affects the independence of the advice being dispensed. Some have asked whether design review panels are now beholden to the developers who ultimately pay the fees that lead to the design review in the first place, while others question whether it has given developers too much power to determine whether they wish to submit their schemes to a design review or not.

In some ways, the commercial imperative profoundly changed the essential relationships within design review, a reality that was not lost on the commercial providers in the early years of the burgeoning market. Indeed, there were reports that some subtly changed their practices to shy away from the more confrontational – and arguably challenging – style of design review practices and adopt a more supportive workshop style. Others argue that such processes are in fact more constructive and less confrontational and do not necessarily imply any loss of independence. Instead, and beneficially, design review has often become more formative in nature and less summative, in the process helping to address some of the reoccurring criticisms levelled at design review prior to 2011, notably that it was frequently too detached and paternalistic in style.

Whether independent or not, operating in the market, design review providers could no longer afford to alienate the clientele on whom they had relied to pay the bills, and neither could they afford to carry out reviews that weren't 'useful' to those commissioning them. Given, however, that the vast majority of their work was commissioned by and conducted for local government (and other public sector organisations), even if paid for by the private sector, design review was clearly still being conducted overwhelmingly with the public interest at heart. Arguably, therefore, the need for repeat public sector business has represented the ultimate guarantee of probity and quality.
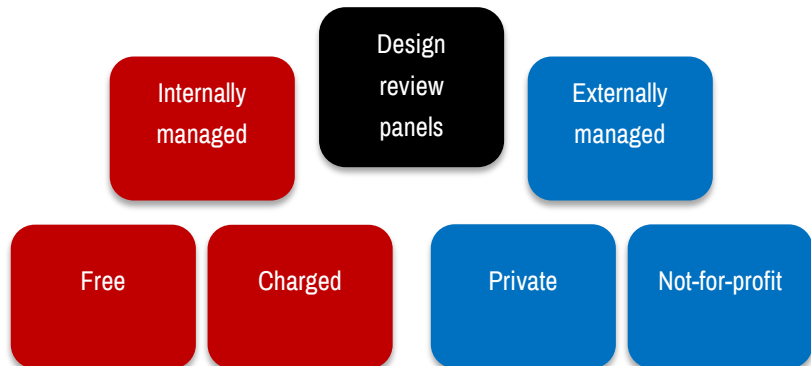
4.2. Attitudes, aspirations and panel types

London is by far the most mature market for design review services. When asked, those managing, the commissioning, or serving on design review panels, alongside the designers presenting to panels, have a series of complementary aspirations for design review. These broadly focus on achieving better design and placemaking than would otherwise be achieved without a panel, notably by empowering local planning authorities to demand better standards from developers. For their part, developers are more circumspect in their aspirations for design review, and whilst accepting that the practice does raise standards of design, its use is often viewed as a necessary additional hurdle to be overcome on the way to receiving planning consent.

Encouraged by the changes in national planning policy, there has been a strong element in London of the municipalities – London's Boroughs – looking towards one another in order to learn from and adopt the best practices of their neighbours. The increasing demand for development across both Inner and Outer London and the

austerity-led squeeze on resources within local government have also led the Boroughs to seek innovative means to assist decision-making within local planning authorities, including greater use of design review. As a by-product, this has also led to a professionalization of design review as Boroughs that had unofficial, sometimes self-appointed, panels have been switching to an official panel with an associated charging regime. Sometimes, there has been opposition to this when local panel members felt disenfranchised, but the change has typically been driven by a realisation that such practices were not able to deliver the step-change in design quality that was desired.

Four types of panel have resulted. First, those set up and managed in-house within a public authority, and second, those managed on behalf of a public authority by an independent third-party contractor. In-house providers can be further divided between those that charge for design review services and those that are offered free to the end user. External providers always charge and can be divided between not-for-profit providers of design review services and private companies.

Types of design review panel in London

The research (see references) revealed no evidence that any of these four models was intrinsically superior to the others (in regards to the quality of service or outcomes), and, when properly resourced, each were capable of delivering positive results. Equally, there was no evidence that particular types of municipality (whether urban or suburban) favoured one form of provision over another, or indeed favoured 'provision' over 'no provision.' In London, however, there were significant advantages and disadvantages that become apparent when comparing in-house panels against those externally managed, and notably when comparing paid for services against those that are free to applicants.

Panel type	Example panel	Example scheme	
Internally managed free	London Borough of Merton, Design Review Panel	Haslemere Industrial estate: A single review led to a re-worked scheme with a significantly reduced building envelope, increased internal space standards, improved canal-side public space, and better articulated building blocks.	
Internally managed charged	London Borough of Wandsworth, Design Review Panel	Redevelopment of the former Battersea Police Station: A single review led to the preparation of a detailed energy strategy, revisions to the important interface between the old and new buildings, improvements to the public realm aspects of the scheme to ensure a better transition between the street and the new block and to improve accessibility, and tweaks to the south west elevation.	
Externally managed private	London Borough of Haringey, Quality Review Panel (managed by Frame Projects)	Land at Plevna Crescent: Two reviews led to the reduction of one pavilion, the re-orientation of the blocks to allow views through the development, and modulation of the blocks in response to the topography	
Externally managed not-for-profit	Thames Tideway Tunnel, Design Review Panel (managed by Design Council CABE)	Victoria Embankment Foreshore: A single review led to the rationalisation of access routes across the site and to a de-cluttering of the ramp area, with the kiosks being consolidated into three, rather than four, structures, and the green landscape elements being revised on maintenance grounds.	

5. RELATIONSHIP WITH FORMAL (REGULATORY) TOOLS

Different models of design review exist. In the US, for example, design review is typically a 'formal' tool for design governance in that it is sanctioned via statute with a formal regulatory role. In the UK, design review has a long history dating back to the 1802 Committee of Taste and throughout has doggedly remained informal in nature, existing outside of statutory regulatory frameworks. Used in this manner, informal design review is an evaluative or rating tool focused on improving the design quality of developments before they obtain formal regulatory consent. This is an approach developed through decades of national government directly funding design review and continues in the market era.

Formal and informal design review processes map onto a further conceptual distinction relating to whether the evaluation of design quality in planning happens in an integrated or separated manner. In 'separated' models, decisions on design are deliberately split from other planning / development concerns, with a separate statutory body – a design review board or commission – responsible for reviewing design. This board either makes a binding recommendation to the zoning / planning board or grants a separate design consent itself (e.g. in the Netherlands). Under such circumstances, the promoters of projects are compelled to undergo design review and, arguably, design issues will consistently receive an appropriate weighting before development approval is given or refused. A shortcoming, however, is the difficulty in making the necessary connections between design and other development issues, some of which – such as decisions on land use zoning, density, and transport / infrastructure provision – have major design implications. In these circumstances, the danger is that any consideration of a design is reduced to 'mere aesthetics.'

In 'integrated' models, design is typically treated as an integral part of broader planning and / or zoning processes, in a single integrated process. In the UK, for example, judgements about the acceptability of a design are ultimately made by local planning authorities, who may or may not seek the advice of an independent design review panel, but whom ultimately are responsible for weighing and balancing the advice received against other factors and determining the weight that should be given to it in the formal decision-making process. In such a system, design review has no formal status and developers are not obliged to submit their projects to its scrutiny, nor are planning authorities obliged to take design advice on board, or even to seek it in the first place (although they are encouraged to in national policy; see below). The danger is that design becomes side-lined by other factors and

sometimes may barely be considered at all. In England, the seriousness with which design recommendations are taken by planning authorities is a matter of local discretion, and it is clear that the practice varies widely between localities.

6. ALLIED FINANCIAL MECHANISMS

At the close of the 85-year-long era of nationally funded and led design review, the function had by no means been universally supported, and considerable doubt existed as to whether design review would survive at all. Following a guarantee of transitional funding from the Government, Design Council CABE was incorporated as a private subsidiary of the new charitable Design Council with the mission of determining whether a market in design review was indeed feasible.

The funding came in the form of £5.5 million over the accounting years 2011/12 and 2012/13, a large portion of which was intended to allow the new organisation – Design Council CABE – to develop its own income streams, most notably by commercialising design review, and in the process jump start a new market. Whilst the withdrawal of funding at the national level from CABE had been dramatic, arguably of equal magnitude was the rapid squeeze of local government finances, most notably those relating to the built environment, driven by the austerity climate into which the country was now immersed. Even if they had wanted to, local government was no longer in any position to purchase design review services, meaning that the future funding of design review could only come from one place, the private sector.

An early initiative of the new government was to streamline the voluminous planning policy (all 1,300 pages of it) that had accumulated over the New Labour years and to replace it with a 65 page National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) published in March 2012 (DCLG 2012). The new framework laid out unequivocal support for the importance of design and included an important new addition to national policy. It stated: "Local planning authorities should have local design review arrangements in place to provide assessment and support to ensure high standards of design."

Coming so soon after the winding up of CABE as a publicly funded organisation, the inclusion of the new guidance may seem surprising. However, for a government aspiring to high quality design yet unwilling to support it financially, it was a logical step on the road to the creation of a market in the governance of design services. Interviews with those involved in the negotiations reported that the Minister of State for Housing and Local Government, Grant Shapps, was particularly keen to work with CABE to find a solution to the funding crisis, although not at public expense. As

design review seemed to be the most easily commoditised tool in the design governance toolkit, it was on that basis that in April 2011, twenty, largely design, review staff, transferred from CABE to the new Design Council CABE.

Therefore, whilst the Coalition Government oversaw the demise of the publicly funded CABE alongside a good part of the larger design governance infrastructure that had gradually been built up across the country since the mid-1990s, it also played the key role in instigating the staggered yet ultimately viable emergence of a market in design review. Underpinning this was the necessary growth of a new bottom-up entrepreneurialism amongst service providers, many of whom had previously been able to rely on direct public funding for their existence and which now had to learn to either sink or swim in this new market.

The Design Network organisations (the equivalent of Design Council CABE in the regions) also quickly concluded that greater diversification and a more supportive offer was required, extending into community engagement, arts and culture, project support, capacity building, skills education, and professional and councillor training; in other words, design review alone would not support them. Unfortunately, whilst each of these services offered potential at expanding the market and at the same time helped change local cultures and priorities on design, most were even more financially marginal, and certainly less predictable, than design review. Nevertheless, to survive in this climate, regional and local organisations adopted a common strategy, which typically involved:

- Being entrepreneurial, supported by a wide range of services (the more diverse the better)
- Reducing fixed overheads (personnel and premises) and utilising an 'expert' network (local and/or regional) that can be flexibly called upon in different combinations as and when required
- Carefully tailoring the offer to local circumstances.

In very different parts of the country, from the largely urban West Midlands to the largely rural South West, and from the relatively wealthy South East to the relatively poorer North, this formula is now repeated across the range of design review providers.

6.1. Purchasers of design review services

In such a context, purchasers of design review services need to pay attention to the quality of the service being provided and how this is reflected in the price being paid.

However whilst there are clear differences, in London at least, between services run on a shoe-string or free basis, and those that are professionally organised (either in-house or externally) and charged for, qualitative differences between the various professionalised (market) providers of design review services in terms of how panels are run and the outcomes they achieve, are harder to detect. This suggests that competition is largely centred on price rather than on the level of service, although providers would certainly dispute this. As a manager at one design review organisation commented: "one of the issues around design review is the different layers of the market. If we're bringing together a national or an international group of experts and yet other players in the market are offering a much less expensive model, but with different quality of results, the question becomes how you value quality and how you pay more for quality, if that's appropriate to your scheme". In other words, a premium service should attract a premium price.

The research revealed a range of perspectives on whether design review is best run in-house (within municipalities and other agencies) or contracted out to a specialist (market) provider of design review services. The benefits of external provision coalesced around the ease of setting up and running panels and the cost effectiveness of this model. The need for a proven, financially neutral model was particularly important to local commissioning authorities, amongst whom the national survey had revealed that the perceived cost to the public purse of providing design review was the number one reason for not using a panel.

Amongst those managed in-house, the dominant perspective was that design review should be a fixture in a constant conversation between developers and their design teams and the local authority, and if there was too much of a separation between the two, the design review could become 'out of sync,' thus leading to mounting tensions. Analysis of the externally managed panels suggested that this had not occurred, and that, however managed, the work of panels could be successfully integrated into other pre- and post-application processes. There was also a perception that payments for design review could be used to help develop design expertise within local authorities with any surplus of income used to support internal design capacity, rather than contributing to the 'profits' of the external organisation.

6.2. Headline costs

With the widespread shift from being a publicly funded service in England to a chargeable one, the headline fees of panels have been much debated. These,

however, are only part of the total cost of design review, and whether a design review process is fee-based or not, it is never free.

By 2017, the headline fees paid by developers to have their projects submitted for design review in London varied significantly: from £0 to £5,000 (plus VAT) for a single full review. The average of those (excluding those that did not charge a fee) was £3,670 per review. Fees are typically reduced by about £500 for a return review (when a site visit is not required) and are even lower for a shorter and smaller 'Chair's review' (on average £1,500 cheaper than a full review). While the information on fees is often no longer fully transparent, these fees were significantly lower than the much larger fees originally envisaged by Design Council CABE, although they are higher than the estimated average cost of £2,500 per review in the days before national funding was withdrawn from CABE.

Furthermore, there was no evidence that, as a category, external private, external not-for-profit, or in-house panels necessarily cost more or less to run, or levied higher or lower fees, than panels in a different category.

Costs that are typically built into the fees paid include paying the chair and panel members (from £200 to £400 per half day), refreshments, room hire, travel, and the hours spent organising the review, preparing the briefing notes, getting the information ready, attending the review and writing it up. In other words, they cover all of the directly incurred management costs of the organisation responsible for setting up and conducting the reviews, plus a profit in the case of external suppliers and an overhead for some in-house suppliers. Design review is clearly seen by some as an area with revenue-raising potential beyond that needed to deliver the review service itself.

6.3. Hidden costs

Even if panels are fully paid for by the developer, there are still likely to be hidden costs for the public sector. As one case officer argued: "a lot of my time is spent on design review – preparing for it, attending, and dealing with the implications of its recommendations – which is not costed as part of that service." Another suggested, however, that "design review is often the tip of the iceberg in work terms. A huge amount of work goes into pre-application advice on design," but that this would most likely be even greater if design review was not there to assist. The comment suggests that there are potential workload compensations to be had or made.

For their part, developers and their teams were subject to two sets of substantial 'hidden' costs, especially as most design teams put a significant amount of work and effort into preparing for a design review, with further costs almost inevitably being associated with the post-review period. These are inconsistent and depend on the nature of the scheme and how well the design was resolved before going into review. Almost inevitably, a panel's recommendations will lead to further design costs, to potential delays to the development process, and/or to costs associated with the ongoing dialogue required to keep planners informed about how a project is responding to the review. These costs are likely to dwarf those paid to the provider of the design review.

6.4. Value and benefits

When asked about whether the costs of design review represented a satisfactory value for the money paid, overwhelmingly the interviewees felt they did, seeing multiple benefits to the practice, although to varying degrees. Developers were the most sceptical and believed that the process needed to demonstrate that it was adding value in order to justify its continuing role, and this meant economic and not just societal value. In this regard, design review can often work against maximising the development potential of sites (in London notably by reducing heights and densities), but developers generally felt it was "a necessary evil to get planning permission in a timely manner" courtesy of a smoother and more streamlined planning process.

Panel managers and local politicians (councillors) were particularly supportive, arguing that when done well, design review is highly efficient and often saves time and money by facilitating a speedier process when it comes to obtaining planning consent. The cost of the service is never more than a minor proportion of the total development budget and is massively outweighed by the value it adds; in effect, it ensures that projects meet the public as well as private interest. As one long-serving manager of a panel confided: "No-one has ever, in all my roles, ever quibbled about the cost of a design review – it's not a problem."

As reported in the recently published national *Housing Design Audit for England*, comparing the headline cost of a single design review against the gross development value (GDV) of an average-sized development project in England reveals a cost of just 0.003% and 0.005% GDV. Moreover, schemes that benefited from the use of a design review were almost four times more likely to appear in the 'good' or 'very good' design categories than in the 'poor' or 'very poor' ones.

7. CHALLENGES AND EQUALITIES ISSUES

The question of independence presented different challenges for panels depending on whether they were internally or externally managed. In-house panels (within municipalities) were sometimes perceived by developers as being too close or too tied to the planning authority to give an unbiased review. Criticism was also levelled at those external providers whose model of operation (particularly in the early years of the developing market) had them being paid by developers directly to deliver a design review service, albeit at the instruction of, and as required by, the requisite municipality. Some felt that at times this relationship between design review providers and developers could become too close.

To avoid such situations, independence always requires that a distance be maintained between the panel and panel managers and developers (and their teams). At a minimum, this seems to require that, even if paid directly by a developer, the client for the review remains the public sector. This has now become the norm. Panels also routinely establish conflict of interest provisions for panel members, with the most transparent maintaining a register of interests to record clients with whom panel members have worked (typically within a five-year period) and whose projects they are therefore unable to review. Increasingly, the constitution of panels is subject to an open process of advertising for members and selection, with attention paid to gender and diversity factors when making selections.

There is also a general issue surrounding the openness and transparency of panels. In part, this reflects the commercial imperatives of market players, but also extends beyond the management of panels to the Boroughs for whom design review is mainly being conducted. Thus, in a context where some large regeneration projects are controversial, many councils are happy not to expose their design review processes to public scrutiny. The large majority of panels are patently not 'transparent' or 'accessible' by any standard that would be recognised as acceptable to meet national standards for public life, and recently this has been raising concerns amongst organisations such as Civic Voice (the voice of local civic societies in England) who are increasingly calling for panels to be opened up to lay and local community members as well.

8. KEY INNOVATIONS, SUCCESSES AND IMPACTS

Evidence from the different research projects listed in the references reveals that design review in England has come a long way. Coming out of the days (pre-2011) when design review was a state-led, state-funded, but also somewhat exceptional activity, the new market in design review services is making the activity not only more widespread, but also more varied in its practices. Most seem to feel that this journey has been a positive one, leading to greater innovation in the sector and to a less paternalistic (top down) character to design reviews. It is certainly encouraging a greater uptake of the practice, which, for advocates of the tool, must be regarded as a success.

What is clear is that today there is no single panel or set of practices that can be singled out as 'the' exemplar to which all others should look. The question is, does (or should) the design review sector also operate like a business? The experience in England has suggested that there is no 'practical' reason as to why not. The marketization of design governance through design review (with encouragement in national policy) seems to be delivering more design review than ever before with no obvious diminution of standards. Instead, it is widely recognised as having improved standards of design, establishing a more positive environment within which good design can flourish, and encouraging a more efficient development process that is more formative and less summative in its assessments; all for a price that the market is willing to pay.

In reality, the situation in England is not a pure market for design review. Instead, we have witnessed a hybrid model of marketization with providers that range from purely private to purely pubic, and everything in-between. There are also limited numbers of market players, suggesting that (in economic terms) what has been witnessed is more akin to an oligopoly rather than a completely free market. Yet, despite the obvious limitations that such a system can place on achieving a competitive marketplace, for the clients of these services (the local authorities in England) there is always the option to eschew the market players altogether and set up their own in-house panel, in the process taking the income and resources for themselves.

A successful market does seem to be operating, albeit it is small, specialised, and not nearly as lucrative as some had hoped it would be at the start; neither do its somewhat secretive practices help in marketing this design governance tool more widely and encouraging the practice of design review to grow.

9. Key lessons and transferability

The situation in England provides a rare example of the marketization of design governance services, although one that may have limited application beyond England or to other tools of design governance. This is because, in England, design review is delivered through an informal (discretionary) but integrated process, within a strong national policy framework. In other words, for the market to work there needs to be enough flexibility in the system to enable parallel, competing, and non-binding models and providers of design review to operate. However, there also needs to be enough authority and / or incentive to ensure that developers feel it is in their best interest to participate in (and pay for) a design review, and that municipalities should back its provision by ensuring that it occurs.

It is therefore possible to conclude with a hypothesis that the marketization of design governance is most likely to occur and will be successful (delivering on the multiple potential benefits of design review) through an informal design review model that operates within an integrated system of design decision-making, albeit one with enough force and, crudely, enough business to sustain it. It seems to be no accident that in England, this has occurred most rapidly and with the greatest degree of innovation in London, precisely where the concentration of development and municipal authorities (the Boroughs) and therefore market opportunities are greatest. The regions are following more slowly behind with providers often serving large geographical territories in order to generate enough business.

At the same time, even in London the external providers of design review have found it tough to market other design governance services on the back of design review. So, whilst there have been concerted attempts by some providers to 'upsell' to their clients, none of the other informal tools of design governance that were so compelling under the auspices of publicly-funded CABE have been saleable to nearly the same degree. As such, it is clearly possible to successfully marketize aspects of design governance, but that does not absolve the public sector's ultimate responsibility for the design of place, and without the public sector creating the demand, there will surely never be any supply.

KEY REFERENCES

The discussion above was based on the following sources of evidence:

- Carmona M (2019) Marketizing the governance of design: design review in England, Journal of Urban Design, 24:4, 523-555
- Carmona M (2018) Reviewing Design Review, in London, Place Alliance, Urban Design London, and Greater London Authority, https://indd.adobe.com/view/6b092a16-9991-4abf-a4ee-9da8719afec5
- Carmona M, Alware A, Giordano V, Gusseinova A and Olaleye F (2020) A Housing Design Audit for England, London, Place Alliance
- Carmona M, de Magalhaes C & Natarajan L (2017) Design Governance: The CABE Experiment, London, Routledge
- Carmona M & Giordano V (2017) Design Skills in English Local Authorities, London, Urban Design Group, Place Alliance

URBAN MAESTRO

DISCLAIMER

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS