

Webinar Q&A Summary: Landscape-Led Development

Monday 2 June 2025

1. Positioning the Profession and Influencing Policy

- **How can we position landscape architects as the first point of contact when assessing a site's development potential?**

AT: I think it's about having the right conversations early so we can identify sensitivities, opportunities, conflicts, potential showstoppers, as well as identifying likely other professional collaborators to make connections with, to help them realise their needs/objectives as well as our own. That's the value we bring as integrators and orchestrators, as well as being the trusted voice who brings an alternative perspective which the client and others may not have thought of.

PA: I agree with the above but would also emphasise the added value of invest now for greater benefit later.

- **Can the Landscape Institute influence the New Towns Task Force to adopt a truly landscape-led approach, especially given tensions between greenbelt focus and climate goals?**

LI: The LI have written to the New Towns Taskforce making the case for a landscape-led approach and Carolin and LI staff met them to discuss further. They are supportive of a landscape led approach and we hope their recommendations reflect that.

- **How can the Institute engage major housebuilders who use 'landscape-led' superficially, excluding early involvement of landscape architects?**

LI: This is a challenge – we have had discussions with Berkley and Vestry about the briefing and are developing plans to further influence developers and local authorities. We have limited resources so are also dependent on members influencing those they work with. Suggestions are welcome!

PA: a huge challenge as the quick return is significant driver! I also think the LI / Local Authorities need to influence at the top of these orgs.

2. Working with Developers and Clients

- **How do we work with volume housebuilders who prioritise cost and delay landscape input, unlike more progressive clients such as Peabody?**

PA: We must get to the leaders in this world, and it won't be easy or quick. Perhaps pilot schemes could help build the case for landscape-led development.

LI: having a clear statement of the case in the Landscape Led Briefing is the first step. We are working to disseminate it further and hope that members will help us to do this through sharing it and advocating for it.

- **What's the best way to demonstrate the value of landscape-led design in terms of measurable time, cost, and quality benefits?**

AT: There are various ways we can do this. There are the demonstrable efficiencies in the planning process of a better and more consent able scheme which has better environmental impacts and footprints and avoiding consequent waste of time, budgets and resources in pursuing a less good option.

There's also the idea of having a good and replicable monitoring framework in place to capture the evidence for the value which landscape led interventions bring – a natural capital/ecosystems services lens based approach is great for this, as we can readily use characteristics of landscapes and landscape designs as proxies for those, and to measure their qualitative and quantitative (monetised) impact over time. This can be in terms not just of value created by a multi-functional, landscape led solution but also potential avoidance of losses/costs and liabilities too.

3. Planning, Policy, and Delivery Challenges

- **How can we maintain landscape-led principles through delivery, preventing erosion of quality during later project stages?**

AT: An iterative, responsive and collaborative Design Practice approach is one way we can achieve this. Another closely related way is a Design Principles approach – collaboratively articulating an agreed set of Design Principles which are the commitments a scheme must deliver, and which will be anchors/points of reference during VE exercises etc. Design Principles can also be aligned with widely understood things like the National Model Design Code. If Design Principles for a project are developed early enough and in the right way i.e. with all relevant professionals and parties buying into them, they can form the Golden Thread which runs through all stages of scheme design, as well as underpinning the intent of things like Production Information.

- **To what extent are long-term management costs and responsibilities embedded in the planning process?**

PA: My sense is very little. It depends upon the developer / landowner and their longer-term ownership. BNG may bring some change in this area BUT resources are stretched...

AT: I agree with this and with resource challenges. Part of it can also stem from the disconnect between aspirations/requirements in this respect in Spatial Planning and how their interpretation plays out in Development Management – the resource gap again.

4. Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects (NSIPs)

- **Do DCO land use requirements in NSIPs constrain landscape-led approaches?**

AT: They shouldn't necessarily do that. It's again about the collaboration piece and having wide and early conversations with diverse disciplines (ecology, agriculture/heritage/water/engineering etc) to influence land requirements and Order Limits (thinking beyond the core red line) to achieve optimum landscape and integration outcomes. It's also about landscape and environmental design which is in scale with the infrastructure it seeks to integrate. The Design Principles approach I've referred to above can also help a lot here.

5. Equality and Public Perception

- **How can we apply a landscape-led approach in disadvantaged communities lacking access to quality green space?**

AT: I think here we need to think about several different things as over-arching principles for this: Proper co-creation and outreach as an integral design stage and as part of iterative design practice. Scale-ability and transferability of ideas too – how we can interpret ideas when retrofitting in constrained locations or small sites - areas which may be of tight urban grain, high density etc, to create design interventions with most multiplicity of benefits and which have the greatest impact for those who may need them most.

Small sites and spaces are also a good creative challenge for bespoke solutions which ensure design quality and enduring design – the design aesthetic should be seamless between a green space in a disadvantaged community and one in a more affluent or privileged setting.

PA: A critical thing here is the case for investment for wellbeing and community cohesion.

- **How do we shift perceptions of wilder landscapes, which are sometimes seen as unsafe or unkempt?**

AT: We have come across this on various rewilding projects and nature recovery focused greenspace schemes we have worked on in our team. At one level, it's about early education and visible advocacy and clear and accessible communication – timely, well placed and well-designed comms materials which set the right tone about a project and its intent. As my colleague David Walker has written in this interesting recent article about accepting 'messier' landscapes, we also need to see change in political discourse and wider public conversation about this: <https://www.pbctoday.co.uk/news/planning-construction-news/making-more-space-nature-will-british-citizens-accept-messier-landscapes/142549/>

I think co-creation of projects and fostering opportunities for involvement, 'ownership' and stewardship can also be a key route to shifting perceptions as it enables user groups and audiences for projects to understand and see at first hand the potential benefits.

6. Redefining Greenspace and Navigating BNG Challenges

- **How do we address the issue of ‘green deserts’, areas labelled as greenspace but with low ecological or social value?**

PA: the case has to be for landscape with purpose - otherwise its quite literally a poor investment

- **Has BNG incentivised developers to meet only the minimum metric requirements through limited soft landscaping?**

AT: My perception is that it may inadvertently have done so through the limitations in the current BNG Metric and how it can be applied. Landscape architects really need to be involved in future iterations of it.

7. Technical Delivery and Site Constraints

- **How can Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) be implemented effectively on contaminated or polluted sites?**

PA: The Olympic Park demonstrates this - SuDS installed above a capping layer.

- **What role can design coding and fixed minimum parameters play in ensuring long-term landscape quality and viability of proposed landscape features?**

LI: Design Coding or a related Design Principles approach can be invaluable in securing landscape design intent and quality during later detailed design and VE exercises, as it can establish a set of non-negotiable commitments which are essential to the integrity of the project. If Design Principles are developed collaboratively and on an inter-disciplinary basis, and iteratively with things like the Landscape Management Plan, this will strengthen the integrated nature of landscape design interventions and their ability to ensure and contribute to long-term design quality.