

REPORT UNDER RULE 2(vi) OF THE COUNCIL PROCEDURE RULES**Report by Councillor Jim Hanrahan, Design Advocate**

An opinion piece in the Times recently called for more to be done to boost the design quality of the built environment. In response to the piece, Ian Tant President of the RTPi said “Despite huge pressure to provide the housing that the country needs and the limited resources at their disposal, Planners are trying hard to negotiate, with developers to demand more in the quality and appearance of new buildings.”

Locally our Planning Team follow the same rigour. Our Lincoln Good Design Awards recognise the outcome of this rigour. Planning applications originate from the desires of applicants, be they businesses, developers or individuals. All have their own idea of the perfect building for their perfect enterprise which is often driven by cost. There are many quasi-legal constraints on what planning can guide and control but gentle persuasion of our planning team and our record at planning appeals is having a positive impact.

Most planning applications receive few if any objections and are dealt with under delegated powers by planning officers. Few of our decisions are taken to appeal and of those that do we win 80% of cases. It’s probably no surprise therefore that good designs prevail. These awards recognise the outcome of this rigour where good designs should prevail having survived forensic officer investigation and the knowledge that the Planning Committee dislike anything that looks like a box.

We all believe that the message has been getting through in recent years and this has led us to the Lincoln Good Design Awards. We approach development positively and proactively and seek to achieve the best outcome we can through collaborative design work with all applicants. We have to be pragmatic and understand the implications of site constraints, which are usually numerous in Lincoln, as well as being aware of ultimate land value and viability. Members now receive pre planning and briefings and informal presentations on major applications to enable them to better participate in the process. This means we can have very open and frank discussions about achieving the best scheme possible each time truly acting as Development Management.

The 2019 Lincoln Good Design Awards were held in the Blue Room at The Lawn, after an online public vote. A panel of Officers and myself selected a short list of 15 schemes on which the public were invited to select their three favourites. There were over 3500 votes cast this year and the winners of the three categories were: **Heritage Award:** The Corn Exchange with The Lawn as runner up. **Residential Award:** Home Grange with Cygnet Wharf as runner up.

Commercial Award: Bishop Grosseteste University extension with Lincoln University’s Isaac Newton building as runner up.

Everyone who attended the event (70), Members, Officers and representatives of the finalists, were impressed by both the venue and the stylish awards! We can all be proud of what was achieved by our approach to design and the event itself. The architects in the city are keen to bask in the glory of being nominated for an award and

especially so when winning one. This can only be good for the quality of future applications and their impact on our fine City.

When I launched this initiative three years ago it was hoped that it would stimulate debate and interest amongst a wider audience especially those who live with our planning decisions. I firmly believe that it is achieving this and the holding of the Design Awards every two years keeps good design in the minds of developers and their agents and bodes well for the positive reputation our City has for investors and developers alike. I hope that we will continue this positive dialogue and host a further Lincoln Good Design Award in 2021.

Cllr Jim Hanrahan (MRTPI): Design Advocate and Chair of the City Planning Committee