



Courtesy: Rob Cowan, *Urban Design Skills*

Making the Best use of Masterplans

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- **There is no standard definition for masterplans, so when you write about them explain clearly what you mean.** Think of who is involved in decision making during the process and ask is this power shared out fairly? Check back to your stakeholder list and the balance of influence at each stage.
- **Have clear design objectives.** Ensure a mix of places and people right for the context; places which are fit for purpose, adaptable and resilient to change; spaces widely used and enjoyed, accessible and navigable; biodiverse places with efficient use of resources; and places which are attractive and interesting.
- **The vision is an area where developers can struggle the most, as the long-term use of a masterplan area may not be the priority of those who develop in it.** The vision needs to be really good and context specific.
- **Masterplans need to be illustrative with clarity about which parts are fixed and which are flexible, as they are likely to need change and adapt over time.** While usually area based you can also masterplan features such as a piece of key infrastructure.
- **Masterplans are complex, with many types and for different scales, with a series of overlaid layers.** As you move down the layers of detail, decisions will be affected by what is set at the more strategic levels. Check back and forth between the layers and against your key design objectives – work up options and ‘shake the plan about’ to keep it open and responsive to your research rather than narrow and restrictive.
- **Masterplans are a process as well as a product – and the process is a very important vehicle for engaging the community.** Play ‘detective’ to understand what’s really happening on the site, moving beyond the lines of a masterplan to how people will experience it as a place. Mapping needs to include people and what they do, not just physical aspects. ‘Day-in-the-life-of’ storyboarding can be really helpful.
- **The plan is not more important than the place – Masterplans fail because they don’t come to terms with the list of things that shape developments.** Test the assumptions you bake into a plan, this is particularly needed in an increasingly uncertain future with climate change and the pandemic acting as stress testers to the way we have been used to living.
- **You are not alone in travelling the masterplanning journey, so team up with other authorities to learn from and support each other.** Take a strategic view of how your masterplanning works across the wider area to join practice up across the borough and wider region.



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Speakers:

Marcus Wilshere, Director, The Collaborative City

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Attendees: 66