



Awards for Planning Excellence Case Study

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800 word submission

In 2019 I made the decision to leave the private sector and start a new career path, joining Plymouth City Council (PCC) as an urban designer. During my career as an architect I came to the realization that the future of the built environment must revolve around a joint response that takes into account both design and planning considerations. Wanting to use my design expertise to create meaningful change, I opted to become a part of PCC's Strategic Growth Team.

My desire to acquire in-depth knowledge and understanding of UK planning policies and frameworks prompted my decision to become a member of the RTPI in 2021.

As part of my desire to influence national policies, I jumped on the opportunity to volunteer and become a part of a PCC task force leading the response to several government policies including:

- The planning white paper issued in Aug 2020 (Response Lead for Pillar 2).
- Supporting housing delivery and public service infrastructure, Jan 2021.
- Model National design code, Nov 2021 (Lead).

I am a passionate advocate for Design Codes, and their ability to support distinct local character and a sustainable environment. I took the initiative and proposed a bid to take part in the government's Phase 2 Pilot Scheme. I presented this to senior management, and wrote and submitted the bid.

Having worked within a planning system outside the UK, I have found it both challenging and rewarding to immerse myself in UK planning regulations. At the same time my unique perspective has allowed me to challenge assumptions, such as the ubiquity of terms like "popular" and "beautiful" in the recent planning white paper.

In the last two and a half years I have engaged with several organizations and institutes, both local and national, with the aim of expanding my own learning and supporting others to do so.

Design Council and Local Government Association: starting in 2020 I took part in a 6-month workshop "Design in the public sector" for local councils in England, exploring innovative ways to address climate change.

The University of Plymouth: in 2021 I was asked by University staff to take part in a final year course for Architecture students dealing with "Mobility hubs". I instructed the students on a weekly basis, hoping to inspire them to think about the connections between planning and design, and providing a positive role model for how architecture and design can act in the service of the public.

My commitment to professional development is also present in my everyday work in the council and as a member of the RTPI. For example:

- The urban design surgery: Though my role includes engaging mainly with strategic applications, I strongly believe that making time to support planning officers with smaller schemes is important. This is why I co-run the urban design surgery, which includes 30 minute slots to discuss smaller applications. The main beneficiaries of this are younger planners that come to expand their knowledge.

- "Beyond the red line" CPD event: Soon after joining the RTPI I initiated and organised a 4-week CPD event focusing on the connection between planning and design from a variety of perspectives, featuring a range of speakers from PCC. This was the first ever online CPD event organised and delivered by PCC. I reached out to RTPI South West, Young Planners SW group and other local groups, who were

well represented among the ca. 50 participants who attended each event. I hope to organise a follow-up joint event with the RTPI SW this year.

The Covid pandemic highlighted the importance of planning to public health, which I have worked to contribute to:

- Becoming a Healthy Streets practitioner: I took part in a voluntary course on embedding public health in transport, the public realm and planning. I have subsequently used the Healthy Streets approach to assess the public realm, and planning applications in particular, throughout Plymouth's city centre, and have advocated for the inclusion of key ideas throughout PCC.

- Preparing Plymouth's city centre social distance measures plan: I was asked, as a matter of urgency, to create this masterplan in April 2020. I also took the initiative of discussing outdoor seating with the manager of the City Centre Company and created 3D renders to illustrate the positive visual impact on the public realm. While the strategy was only partially implemented, I am hoping that my original approach to outdoor seating will be considered again when funds are available.

Since joining PCC I have worked with a variety of organizations, created new connections, fostered good working relationships, supported young planners and students and worked to link planning and high quality design in a variety of ways. I have demonstrated commitment to professional development, both my own as well as colleagues and am very proud of my achievements in such a short time.

Please note that this case study has been taken from their entry form and so RTPI does not take responsibility for accuracy of contents. Readers are encouraged to undertake further research into the project which is likely to have developed since the time that this entry was written.