

## 0.2 Effective communication

Realising successful urban projects depends upon effective communication.

The Government's modernised planning regime places strong emphasis on the full involvement of local communities at every stage of policy and project development. This requires first-rate communication throughout the consultation process.

The teams involved in the design and delivery of urban design projects include a wide range of professions and specialists who need to communicate effectively and speedily with each other. Projects can be compromised or even fail through breakdowns in communication that lead to misunderstanding.

There are two sides to the communication process. Information and vision need to be transmitted to the target audience using the right media and techniques. In their turn, the audience must be able to understand and engage with the message. Visual techniques play an important role in transferring knowledge and creating a basis for debate.



*Interactive computer presentation at Bathgate public consultation*



*Public consultation for East Cowes masterplan*

The array of techniques and media can be overwhelming, but irrespective of how well these techniques have been mastered, selecting the right form of presentation for the particular audience at the particular stage in the urban design process is the key to success.

Throughout the development process, from the initial concepts to the detailed proposals, the effective communication of information and ideas depends on several interrelated factors including:

- type of information to be presented
- clarity of information
- accuracy and validity of information
- audience awareness and levels of understanding
- media selected to present information.

## 0.3 Teamwork and leadership

No guidance can substitute for a well-led, talented and committed design team.

The project designers (architects, urban designers, landscape architects etc.) must be able to recognise when the job switches to the illustrative designers – the graphic designers and artists. There is no definitive point at which this should happen; it depends on the skills in the team, the stage of the project and the messages to be conveyed. Equally, the graphic designers need freedom to exercise their skills and imagination but not to the extent that the graphics, however attractive, detract from the essential urban design messages.

As the range of urban design products grow, so do the range of specialists involved: perspective artists, computer-aided design (CAD) designers, photographic and photo-editing specialists, cartographers, GIS operatives, artists, even cartoonists, may need to be called upon to support the core professionals and graphic designers on the team.

Strong leadership, understanding and deploying the right skills at the right time, listening to all, then deciding is generally the best way forward.