

PRESENTATION

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The communication of ideas is central to the design process. Ideas, however good they may be, remain still-born until they are expressed in terms which engage the support of key actors in the development process. For this purpose, ideas which infuse an urban design project, together with a supporting argument, have to be expressed with clarity, economy and enthusiasm. The presentation of urban design proposals often involves reports and sets of documents similar in form and content to those prepared for planning projects. Urban design reports may include a description of the survey, its analysis and a fully evaluated final proposal with its cost. This written material is accompanied by maps, drawings, photographs and models. The proposal may then be presented in a number of arenas and defended at Public Inquiries and planning appeals.

The style adopted for report writing is of the utmost importance. One can use this written report as an opportunity to sell the idea to client and public. For this purpose a simple, straightforward text is the most effective. The main reason for any report is 'to get an idea as exactly as possible out of one mind into another'.¹ Sir Ernest Gowers' book *The Complete Plain Words* remains one of the best guides to the process of writing: *The Complete Plain Words*, together with *Fowler's Modern*

English Usage, *Roget's Thesaurus* and *The Shorter Oxford English Dictionary* should be essential reference material for the report writer.² The report writer's job is to convey his or her ideas to others in the most efficient and economical form. Writing is, for the professional designer, simply, an instrument to make the reader apprehend readily and precisely the meaning of a report.

There are features, commonly found in report writing, which obstruct this process of precise communication. One such feature is the long shopping list of points, the text moving from one boring list to the next, putting to sleep even the most avid report reader. It may be more appropriate to place such lists of points in boxes or tables, referring only to their main features in the text. Using this approach, the list of items does not interrupt the main thrust or flow of the argument, which should be presented in readable prose. Emphasis, in the form of emboldened lettering; asterisks, often referred to as 'bullet points' in some management texts; or underlining, should be used infrequently. Points of emphasis should be evident from the text. Verbosity is a common fault found in report writing. The art of writing is to express the idea with the utmost economy of words. The basic rules for good writing are: to use one word rather than many; to