

Sustainable Design Collective

Thursday 29th September 2022 – Milliken showroom

Core Team:

Harsha Kotak, WOD; Joanna Knight, WOD; Ella Fathi, Oktra;
Georgia Elliott-Smith, Element 4

Collective Members:

Angela Dapper, Grimshaw; Laura Wardrope, JLL; Asif Din, Perkins & Will;
Rhiannon Laurie, Gensler; May Fawzy, MF Studio / BIID;
Dicky Lewis, White Red Architects; Lucy Bagshaw, TP Bennett; Emily King, BDP;
Gurvinder Khurana, M Moser; Natasha Hewlett, Peldon Rose;
Ana Rita Martins, Woodalls Design; Nigel Tresise, Align; Deepak Parmar, MCM;
Jennie GreenWalker, MAA Architects; Dom Pegram, Salt & Pegram;
Jennifer Russell, Bureau Group; Matt Davies, The Furniture Practice;
Anja Schellenbauer, Conran and Partners; Fiona Edwards, JPA Workspaces.

Supporters: Shaw Contract; Steelcase; Sedus UK; Solus Ceramics; Milliken;
Orluna LED; Workplace Insight

Purpose:

A 'think tank' group committed to acting as a collective within the workplace design community to identify developments and 'best practice' relating to sustainability.

This report highlights some of the points raised during the two-hour discussion. We have also flagged some key potential outcomes for the future.

Meeting Five: Driving greater standardisation

A key topic for this event was the potential for greater uniformity of information required from suppliers. Can we share and standardise templates so suppliers aren't overwhelmed with so many different formats?



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Places & Products:

Discussions started with an overview of members' current approaches to questionnaires and obtaining information from suppliers.

Many inhouse databases provide a traffic light system based upon selected criteria which indicate the most favourable product / material selection.



“Some of our designers don’t use our database information as it is too complicated.”

“I am an interior designer, not a scientist!”

“It is often difficult to make accurate assessments. For example, which is environmentally ‘better’? xx% recycled content vs a higher percentage for recyclability?”

Larger practices often have dedicated sustainability personnel who will assess and weight the responses based upon the information provided. Smaller practices are unlikely to have a dedicated team and a designer will have to make their own assessments.

“Some design practices have very detailed questionnaires, but every practice will tend to have different ‘nuances’ for their requirements.”

“We can’t assume that we all want to know the answers to the same questions.”

“One of the difficulties is determining what we are trying to achieve – what is sustainable?”

“Should there be an emphasis on the manufacturer and supplier, not just the products? Are they measuring their carbon footprint, and do they have a carbon reduction plan?”

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“Do we need a questionnaire for clients to assess their priorities?”

“Many clients still need educating in terms of environmental impacts.”

“Should we be asking more questions about proposed installation techniques. For example, what type of adhesives to be used or how will disassembly and end of life be supported? Should we have a separate questionnaire specifically for contractors and installers?”



“Installation requirements and specification should be contractual but who actually checks that the installation techniques have been implemented?”

“Design & Build projects, in particular, have a greater risk of the potential for ‘shortcuts’ and non-compliance with installation requirements.”

“We will not include a supplier in our database if we are not satisfied that they achieve baseline standards.”

“As designers, this is our opportunity to make a tangible impact. We can establish baseline standards.”

“We always aim to meet to suppliers who cannot be included in our database to provide the opportunity to explain why and improvements needed.”

“We host ‘lessons learnt’ sessions between project phases in order to drive continuous improvement.”

“A barrier to entry for many suppliers continues to be third party verified EPDs or other certifications. Perhaps there should be a levy to help support smaller, emerging suppliers afford the cost of verification?”

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People:

The Collective focussed on Social Value as metrics for sustainability. The UK Government's Social Value Model is already applied to public sector procurement tenders and ESG (Environmental, Social, Governance) is of significant importance to many corporates. How should the workplace design community be contributing?

The UK Green Building Council's 'Guide for delivering Social Value on Built Environment Projects' was discussed.

"We are evaluating diversity across the supply chain to consider inclusion of all types of contractors and suppliers on major projects."

"Some projects are too big for the inclusion of some SMEs, microbusinesses or social enterprises within Tier 1 and possibly Tier 2."

"We do want diversity from the ground level up – starting with Tier 3."

"As designers, we should be considering a full range of social value issues."

"BCorp membership is certainly starting to drive greater social change."

"Many projects are now designed for inclusion – such as mothers', wellness, and prayer rooms. Should these facilities be included within Building Regulations as in some other countries?"

"If facilities are not included within Regulations they are too easily excluded particularly if cost savings are needed."

"The built environment has a massive impact on the people they serve."

OUTCOMES:

SDC will be forming 'action committees' to review the discussions about supplier questionnaires and benchmark standards. The intention is to develop standardised documentation, guidance and standards which can be adopted by the wider design community.

FOOTNOTE:

The Sustainable Design Collective meets every two months. Each meeting addresses different initiatives designed to tackle the impact on our environment.



A Women in Office Design Initiative

A summary document will be published after each meeting which will be hosted on the Sustainable Design Collective's web site – an example of knowledge sharing.

We welcome comment and contributions from the office design sector.

www.woduk.com/sdc