

## **Category: Corporate Design and Communications**

### **Project: Landmark Planning 2019 website redesign**

#### **What was the challenge?**

Landmark Planning is a high-quality niche town planning consultancy based in Leicester, United Kingdom, operating throughout the Midlands area. Their website [www.landmarkplanning.co.uk](http://www.landmarkplanning.co.uk) was designed in 2002, and was in use until the end of 2018 (1st version). In 2019 Thomas Bohm (Director of User Design, Illustration and Typesetting) worked with Landmark Planning once again to redesign their website, producing their 2nd version (running from 2019 onwards), which would be fit for their users, potential new clients, and the future.

The 1st version website (2002–2018) had served them well, which used a simple and straightforward design, but the website code and technology had not really been updated since 2002. The website used very little proper and meaningful HTML formatting (which by default provides some degree of accessibility), many ALT tags for images were missing, their 'Recent project examples' section did not make use of images well (that would be useful and beneficial for potential clients and were not large enough to see all the details), the main body text was Arial 12pt, there was no real text editorial style, and the website still used HTML frames throughout.

I had many meetings in the Landmark Planning office with the director and employees, we talked at length about what was needed.

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Using the information gained at meetings, I then emailed all Landmark Planning's employees with a questionnaire to send back to me via email (they were told not to discuss what they had written to anyone else, or other employees, they were also told that their feedback would not be held against them and that it would be handled anonymously, and that they could say anything they liked: positive or negative). Here are some of the questions asked:

- What works well, or does not work well?
- What do old clients and new clients want to know and see from the website (what would they want in terms of getting them to put a new project or enquiry through you, or when using a new town planning company)?
- Is there anything the website could do that would make Landmark Planning function better as a business, for example, business efficiency?
- Have you ever heard from someone externally comment on the website positively or negatively? Have you ever heard someone say 'I cannot do this' or 'I am having trouble with this'?
- Is there anything you find difficult or hard to use (text or graphics)?

Furthermore, the client had received feedback from 2 people outside the business about critical design issues with the 1st version website. All of this gave us extra starter information about the problems and requirements for the project. I also had further meetings with the client probing to find out what 'potential clients' would want and would want to know and see from the website. Additionally I visited, evaluated and assessed around 40 other similar town planning business websites to see how they communicate with their users.

#### **What was the solution?**

The redesigned website was not radically

different in aesthetics than the 1st version, we built upon the good of the 1st version and improved where needed. Here are the main design improvements:

- We used a body text size that was 18pt (Google recommends no less than 16pt, for good reasons as well).
- Used a typeface that was legible, aesthetically pleasing and fitting for what the client does and wants to be seen to be about.
- The navigation bar was moved from the right of the screen, to the left, to improve usability on large desktop monitors, when a right side navigation bar can be too far away from the main content on the left. The navigation bar is reloadable, which means if a user closes or opens the navigation bar, if they then resize their screen, it will reload back in depending on the viewpoint width. It was very difficult to find a solution that would do this.
- All webpages, except 2 issues, pass the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) to level AA, checked using the WAVE Accessibility Extension by WebAIM (using the version before 3.0.4, 15 Nov 2019). The code for Google maps does not agree with the checker, and there was a minor lack of color contrast in the navigation bar. Except for these issues, the website was very close to level AAA (the highest of the 3 levels).
- We checked all webpages with various screenreaders (unfortunately screenreader software differs and they do not all produce the same result, but in all cases, we made improvements and made it work as well as possible with the specific screenreader).
- The website has a skip navigation option.
- We wrote an extensive and friendly website accessibility statement, with a link to it at the bottom of all webpages.
- Major improvements and simplification were done to the main website sections (as seen in the navigation bar).

- Defined use of heading hierarchy and sectioning main body content.
- All images were optimized for best quality and speed ratio and all images had properly written ALT tags describing the image content.
- We established a text editorial style for all text content. This added greater clarity to text content reducing potential confusion for readers.
- The ‘Project examples’ section was greatly improved: images were larger than previously, we used many headings to section and draw out the different types and parts of information for each project case study, that people and potential new clients are going to want to know, and to see quickly and clearly, when possibly considering using Landmark Planning’s services.
- Latest HTML code used, utilizing the Bootstrap framework. We also used icons/pictograms (originally the size of the icon code was 576KB, we stripped out unnecessary icons reducing the file size to 5KB).
- We put a massive amount of work into improving the clarity and order of all their previous conferences, 53 in total. Information was provided in PDF format where available, but also as large JPG images because people using a mobile phone cannot open PDFs.
- Improved search engine presence. ‘Town planning Midlands’ was identified with the client to be the most important and popular search term for them. A search for ‘Town planning Midlands’ shows that the Landmark Planning website is on the 1st page of Google results (at not by luck).
- We used Google ‘Event’ rich snippets so their current events get displayed better.
- The website was cross device tested. PC and Mac using: Chrome, Firefox and Safari. Also mobiles: iPhone 8 (iOS version 12), using Safari 12. iPhone 7 (iOS version 12), using Safari 12. Samsung Galaxy J3 (Android version 8), using Chrome 74.

Towards the end of the project, I went again into Landmark Planning with a newly updated version of the website redesign project, and there were a number of ‘design problems’ that I listened to, analyzed, noted and then fixed, that people were having with the new redesign. Some included very tricky to fix internet browser bugs.

### What was the effect?

Sometimes well designed items produce a quiet response. Because of good and considered design for lots of different types of people, the website creates a professional, strong and aesthetically pleasing image of the business. It is highly accessible and usable, which aims to give people what they need and want. Some people say a design cannot be accessible and usable and still look good... hopefully this project disproves the statement. The website now gives Landmark Planning every chance of winning million pound town planning projects. All text content is in a better tone

and is clearer and more precise. The 1st version website was not very usable on a mobile device, the 2nd version is now fully responsive. The website design should last for many years to come, without the need to typically redesign again in a few years time. People can now view their 53 past conferences much better on whatever device they are using. This furthers adds credibility to Landmark Planning against competing businesses. We also made public, and in an obvious way (at the bottom of every webpage) our accessibility and usability commitment.

The project was an example of a high level of design skill being applied, with a tonne of fixing and optimization, very little was left unaddressed. The client and employees also have to be praised and awarded, as they fully committed to the design process and we all worked very well together, in a critical and productive way (never battling).

2 webpages from the 2019 redesigned 2nd version Landmark Planning website  
[www.landmarkplanning.co.uk](http://www.landmarkplanning.co.uk)

2 webpages from the 1st version Landmark Planning website, which ran from 2002–2018 (before the 2019 redesign version).