



CAMDEN  
DESIGN  
REVIEW PANEL  
ANNUAL  
REPORT

IN PARTNERSHIP WITH

Frame Projects  
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# INTRODUCTION

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The Camden Design Review Panel was set up in 2016 by Frame Projects on behalf of the London Borough of Camden. It is chaired by Catherine Burd and includes 34 professional experts, selected through an open recruitment process in collaboration with Camden officers.

Terms of Reference, available via the Council's website, set out the role and remit of the panel, and the way in which it supports the planning process. Schemes requiring design advice are identified by planning officers and referred to the panel for a review. Officers provide a briefing on planning context and key issues, both in writing for the meeting agendas, and in person at the panel meeting. Advice given by the panel is recorded in a report, to assist with continuing pre-application negotiations, or to advise the planning committee on submitted schemes.

The Camden Design Review Panel advised on 17 schemes in the year from October 2020 to September 2021. Nine of these schemes have been reviewed on more than one occasion. First reviews usually take place at a stage when a client and design team have decided their preferred option for development of a site, and have sufficient drawings, models, etc. for a comprehensive discussion. There will often be a second pre-application review to provide advice on more detailed design matters, prior to planning submission.

Since October 2020, the panel has also held three review meetings – including a focussed session on sustainability – to discuss the developing Euston Masterplan. These meetings have involved members of the Camden Design Review Panel, with the addition of the Chair of the HS2 Euston Independent Design Panel.

Frame Projects has developed a process for monitoring and evaluating the impact of design review panels. This process allows us to obtain insight into the effectiveness and performance of each of our panels, as well as valuable information on significant emerging issues from panel reviews. It also provides public transparency and allows for continual improvement of our services. This process includes collecting quantitative information based on the reviews carried out from October 2020 to September 2021. It also includes feedback from panel members, applicants and local authority representatives gathered through anonymous surveys.



This framework builds on the initial work done by Public Practice to develop a monitoring tool for design review.

Quantitative data was gathered from reviews that took place from 1 October 2020 to 30 September 2021.

Due to government restrictions relating to Covid-19, all review meetings managed by Frame Projects were conducted online via video conference from 16 March 2020 to 20 September 2021.

## PANEL

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Authority	London Borough of Camden
Review Panel name	Camden Design Review Panel
Panel management	Externally managed, Frame Projects
Contact name for panel	Tom Bolton, Frame Projects
Contact email address	Tom@frame-projects.co.uk
Report produced by	Panel Programme Manager, Frame Projects

Image: Bourne Estate, Matthew Lloyd Architects for Camden Council © B Luxmoore



# REVIEW TOTALS

Total number of reviews

**20**

Formal reviews  
(chair plus 4 panel members)

**11**

Bespoke reviews

**3**

Number of site visits (in person)

**2**

Number of follow up reviews

**9**

Chair's reviews  
(chair plus 1 panel member)

**6**

Surgery reviews

**0**

Number of site visits (virtual)

**18**

# PANEL COMPOSITION

## PANEL MEMBERS USED THIS YEAR

No. of different panel members used

**31**

Male panel members

**58%**

Female panel members

**42%**

BAME panel members  
(based on 31 diversity forms)

**23%**

## PANEL EXPERTISE USED

Architecture

**39**

Urban design / town planning

**18**

Heritage / conservation

**5**

Community Engagement

**1**

Landscape

**12**

Sustainability

**6**

Transport

**2**

# PROPOSALS REVIEWED

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## APPLICANT TYPE

Private developer

**16**

Local authority

**2**

Private public partnership

**2**

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## STAGE OF PROPOSAL

Pre application

**19**

Planning application  
submitted

**1**

Amendment to  
approved application

**0**

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## TYPE OF PROPOSAL

Masterplan

**6**

Mixed use

**4**

Policy or strategic document

**0**

Commercial

**3**

Residential (1-50 units)

**3**

Residential (50+ units)

**1**

Healthcare

**1**

Education

**2**

Frame Projects has worked with the local planning authority to identify schemes to assess as part of the monitoring and evaluation process. These consist of schemes that were reviewed by the Design Review Panel, and a planning decision was determined between 1 October 2020 to 30 September 2021.

The schemes used for feedback in this evaluation are:

- 11-12 Ingestre Road 2018/4443/P
- 115-119 Camden High Street 2019/3138/P
- Godwin Crowndale 2020/3801/P
- Belmont Street 2020/4825/P
- St Pancras Commercial Centre 2019/4201/P
- 60-86 Royal College St 2020/0728/P
- Chester Road 2020/3461/P
- 155 Regent's Park Road 2021/0877/P
- Central Saint Martin's School 2020/2470/P
- 248-250 Camden Road 2020/3737/P
- RNTNE Hospital 2020/5593/P
- Moorfields Eye Hospital 2020/4825/P
- 247 Tottenham Court Road 2020/3583/P
- Network Building 2020/5624/P
- Tottenham Mews 2020/5633
- 17-37 William Road 2020/5473/P
- Land between Gondar House and South Mansions, Gondar Gardens 2021/2596/P

Image: 373 Euston Road - Birkbeck exterior, Penoyre & Prasad © Timothy Soar





Anonymous survey responses were collected from the applicants (planning agent and lead architects), panel members who attended the reviews, and local authority representatives (planning officers) who were leading on the schemes. Surveys took the format of yes / no questions with options to provide further specific feedback. Participants were sent an email inviting them to take part in the survey and given two weeks to provide feedback, with one follow-up reminder.

Image: Caudale © Tim Crocker and Mæ



# APPLICANT QUESTIONNAIRE

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28 applicants were contacted twice to complete the feedback questionnaire.

5 out of 28 applicants responded to the following questions:

1. Did you find the review sessions were conducted in a constructive manner?
2. Were you clear about the information you needed to provide prior to the review?
3. Did you consider that the advice from the panel helped to improve the proposal?
4. Did you feel that the panel reports accurately captured review discussions?
5. Did you think that the panel's advice assisted with officer and council discussions?
6. Would you recommend using the Design Review Panel?
7. Any other comments?

## APPLICANT FEEDBACK

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All applicant respondents agreed that review sessions were conducted in a constructive manner, and that the advice from the panel assisted with officer and council discussions, helping to improve final scheme proposals. All those who responded to the questionnaire said that they were clear about the information that they needed to provide prior to the review, and that they would recommend using the Design Review Panel as part of the planning application process.

One applicant highlighted that the panel's comments in relation to the sustainability of the proposed development helped ensure that Camden's policies resisting demolition were fully addressed alongside other design changes.



# LOCAL AUTHORITY QUESTIONNAIRE

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16 local planning authority representatives were contacted twice to complete the feedback questionnaire. 7 out of 16 local authority representatives responded to the following questions:

1. Were you clear about the information you needed to provide and your role in the review process?
2. Did you find the panel's comments during the review clear and constructive?
3. Did you find the review session and report clear and useful?
4. Did you find the panel's advice helped support negotiations on design quality?
5. Did you incorporate the panel's comments into a delegated planning report or reported to committee?
6. Did you feel that the planning committee gave weight to the design review advice during decision making?
7. Any other comments?

## LOCAL AUTHORITY FEEDBACK

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Based on feedback received from the local authority, Camden officers remain happy with the design review process. All respondents felt that the panel's comments during review sessions were clear and constructive, and that both the meetings and the final reports were helpful in supporting negotiations on design quality. Officers also agreed that the Planning Committee gave weight to design review advice during the decision-making process.

One officer mentioned that the Design Review Panel provides developers with confidence by highlighting elements that are acceptable or problematic at an early stage in the design process.

# PANEL QUESTIONNAIRE

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19 panel members were contacted twice to complete the feedback questionnaire. 10 out of 19 panel members responded.

1. Did you feel that the level of information provided prior to the review session was appropriate?
2. Did you consider the site visits a benefit to the review session?
3. Did you consider the information presented at the review to be sufficient to enable a thorough review?
4. Did you consider planning officer written and verbal briefings provided clarity on design and policy issues?
5. Did you feel that panel reports accurately captured review discussions?
6. Did you feel that you could contribute your advice fully?
7. Any other comments?

## PANEL FEEDBACK

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On the whole, panel members considered that the level of information provided prior to a review session was appropriate. All panel members felt that they were able to contribute their advice fully, and that the reports accurately captured review discussions.

While the majority of those who responded to the survey agreed that physical site visits are beneficial in helping panel members understand the developers' proposals, one respondent commented that the usefulness of virtual tours is more variable.

In terms of planning officer briefings, one panel member suggested that it would be useful for officers to set out more clearly the key issues to be reviewed. Most panel members agreed that information presented by applicants during the review was sufficient to enable a thorough review, but that on some occasions long sections through the site and beyond are absent.

# EMERGING ISSUES AND NEXT STEPS

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Physical site visits by panel members before a review meeting offer significant benefits to the review process. Frame Projects was able to return to in-person meetings at the end of the period covered by this report. Subsequently, it has been necessary to return review meetings to an online format following rises in COVID-19 cases. Frame Projects prioritises in-person reviews and will ensure the Camden Design Review Panel meet in person whenever possible, as soon as Camden officers agree it is safe to do so.

Frame Projects will continue to work to include the widest possible range of panel members in review meetings during the course of each year, subject to availability and the requirements of each scheme. It is particularly important that sustainability experts are included on review panels more often, as the panel's expertise in this area has recently been boosted. The positive feedback from an applicant respondent suggests this advice would be welcomed.

Frame will remind officers to outline key concerns relating to proposals in planning officer briefings, both in the written briefing and in person at the review meeting. It is Frame's role to ensure Camden officers understand the opportunities available to them to communicate to the panel the most important issues for the council on each development.

Image: Agar Grove © Jim Stephenson and Mæ

