



WATFORD
PLACE SHAPING
PANEL

YEAR TO
31 MARCH 2023

ANNUAL
REPORT

IN PARTNERSHIP WITH

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WATFORD
BOROUGH
COUNCIL



INTRODUCTION

The Watford Place Shaping Panel was set up in 2020 by Frame Projects on behalf of Watford Borough Council. It is chaired by Peter Bishop and includes 19 professional members, selected through an open recruitment process in collaboration with Watford officers.

Terms of Reference, available on the planning authority'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 review. Officers provide a briefing on the planning context and key issues, both in writing for the meeting agenda, 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 Watford Place Shaping Panel has advised on five separate schemes in the year from 1 April 2022 to 31 March 2023. Two 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 the development of a site, and have sufficient drawings, models and other information for a comprehensive discussion. There will often be a second pre-application review, to provide advice on more detailed design matters, before planning submission.

Frame Projects has developed a process for monitoring and evaluating the impact of quality 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 the 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 reviews carried out. This report covers the period from 1 April 2022 to 31 March 2023, and includes feedback from panel members, applicants and local planning 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 April 2022 to 31 March 2023.

PANEL

Authority

Watford Borough Council

Review Panel name

Watford Place Shaping Panel

Panel management

Externally managed, Frame Projects

Contact name for panel

Bonnie Russell, Frame Projects

Contact email address

Bonnie@frame-projects.co.uk

Report produced by

Bonnie Russell, Frame Projects

Image: Watford High Street © Watford Borough Council



REVIEW TOTALS

Number of first reviews

3

Number of site visits

3

Small scheme reviews
(chair plus two panel member)

1

Number of follow up reviews

2

Formal reviews
(chair plus four panel member)

2

Chair's reviews
(chair plus one panel member)

2

PANEL COMPOSITION

PANEL MEMBERS USED THIS YEAR

No. of different panel members used

9

Male panel members

34%

Female panel members

66%

Diverse ethnic background

PANEL EXPERTISE USED

Architecture

10

Landscape / public realm

4

Heritage / conservation

1

Community engagement

0

Urban design / town planning

1

Housing professional

0

Sustainability

0

Other

1

PROPOSALS REVIEWED

APPLICANT TYPE

Private developer

4

Local authority

1

Public private partnership

0

STAGE OF PROPOSAL

Pre application

5

Planning application
submitted

0

Amendment to
approved application

0

TYPE OF PROPOSAL

Masterplan

0

Mixed use

4

Residential (1-50 units)

0

Residential (50+ units)

0

Policy or strategic document

1

Commercial

0

Public realm

0

Education

0

EMERGING ISSUES AND NEXT STEPS

Due to the small number of schemes referred to the Watford Place Shaping Panel in the reporting period 1 April 2022 to 31 March 2023, it has not been possible to produce a full report of the panel's work over the past year. However, based on the expertise used for the review meetings that did take place, it is clear that panel members specialising in areas such as urban design, heritage and sustainability could be used more frequently. An effort will be made 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 individual schemes.

Approximately half the panel members on the Watford Place Shaping Panel took part in a review in this reporting window. Every effort will be made to reach out to the full range of experts on the panel for future reviews.

Image: Cassiobury Park Hub Building © Knox Bhavan

