



BRENT QUALITY
REVIEW PANEL

JULY 2024
- JUNE 2025

ANNUAL
REPORT

IN PARTNERSHIP WITH

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INTRODUCTION

The Brent Quality Review Panel was set up in 2022 by Frame Projects on behalf of the Brent Council. It is co-chaired by Kaye Stout, partner of Pollard Thomas Edwards, and Tom Greenall, director of DSDHA. The panel includes 28 professional members, selected through an open recruitment process in collaboration with Brent 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 Brent Quality Review Panel has advised on 16 schemes in the year from July 2024 to June 2025. Eight 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, etc. for a comprehensive discussion. There will often be a second pre-application review, to provide advice on more detailed design matters, before planning submission.

Cover image: Brent Quality Review Panel site visit © Frame Projects
Image: Brent Quality Review Panel site visit © Frame Projects



PANEL

Authority

Brent Council

Review Panel name

Brent Quality Review Panel

Panel management

Frame Projects

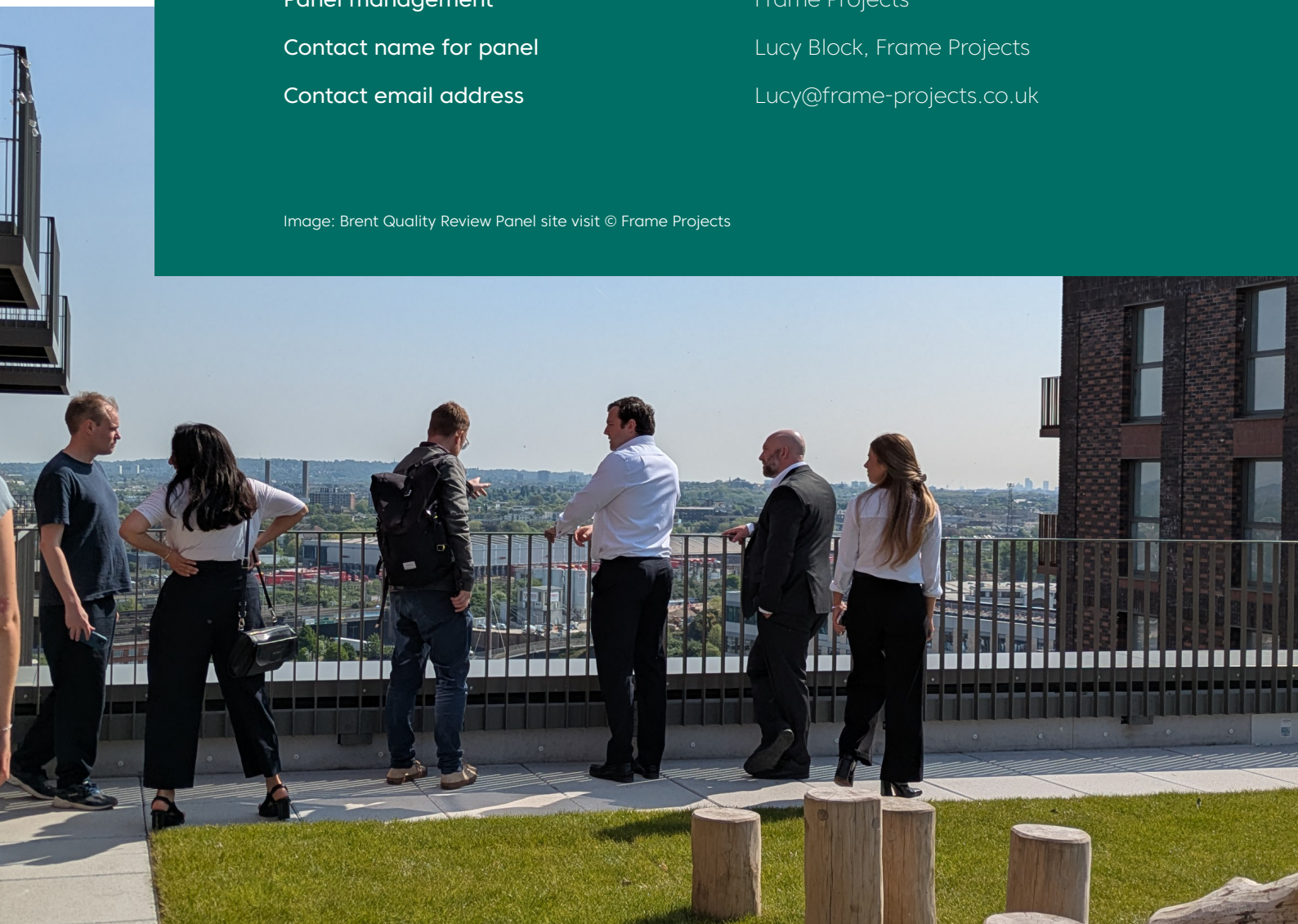
Contact name for panel

Lucy Block, Frame Projects

Contact email address

Lucy@frame-projects.co.uk

Image: Brent Quality Review Panel site visit © Frame Projects



REVIEW TOTALS

Number of reviews

16

Number of site visits

8

Number of first reviews

8

Number of follow up reviews

8

Formal reviews
(chair plus four panel members)

8

Workshop reviews
(chair plus two panel members)

4

Chair's reviews
(chair plus one panel members)

4

PANEL COMPOSITION

PANEL MEMBERS USED THIS YEAR

No. of different panel
members used

22

Male panel members

52%

Female panel members

48%

Diverse ethnic background

47%

PANEL COMPOSITION

Total panel member
attendance for each area
of expertise during the
reporting period

Architecture

15

Urban design /
town planning

12

Health and
wellbeing

8

Sustainability

15

Landscape /
ecology

6

Community
engagement

4

PROPOSALS REVIEWED

APPLICANT TYPE

Private developer

15

Local authority

0

Public private partnership
(joint venture)

1

STAGE OF PROPOSAL

Pre pre-application

1

Pre-application

14

Post submission

1

TYPE OF PROPOSAL

Mixed use

6

Residential

4

Commercial

3

Student accommodation

2

Masterplan

1

EMERGING THEMES AND ISSUES

The Brent Quality Review Panel continues to play a highly valuable role within the planning process. It is the most diverse panel that Frame Projects manages, benefitting from a broad range of expertise. Panel membership has been bolstered this year, through additional masterplanning, urban design and housing experts. There have been a high proportion of returning schemes, which is encouraging and demonstrates how the panel's advice is being taken on board to influence the design of the schemes.

The majority of schemes reviewed have been within growth areas or strategic site allocations, including Neasden, Bridge Park and Wembley. While the panel has mainly reviewed residential and mixed use schemes, there have also been a number of industrial developments and commercial sites. The panel's input on these types of development has been particularly valuable, providing insight into important strategic employment zones within the borough.

There are ongoing issues related to viability, the Building Safety Act and High Risk Buildings, which has had a clear impact on the type and scale of schemes coming forward. While cognisant of these challenges, the panel continues to promote high-quality design focussing on the wellbeing and quality of life for residents within higher density, tall buildings.

The panel's focus on sustainability and low carbon design continues to be positive, but there is still a varying level of detail provided within presentations. While the guidance Frame Projects provide to applicants highlights the importance of environmental and regenerative design, there is scope for this to be pushed further to set an expectation that designs exceed minimal compliance to address wider social benefits, as well as health and wellbeing.

There is also a growing recognition of the importance of high quality public realm and landscape as a critical component of healthy living. The panel will continue challenging applicants on their biodiversity and ecology approaches.

FORWARD LOOK

The recent Annual Meeting was a useful opportunity to provide feedback and updates to panel members, following their input into the pre-application process. There is great value when schemes come forward at an early stage. The council's planning performance agreements help to reinforce this message, as well as encouraging schemes coming multiple times to ensure the panel remains an integral part of the process. Frame Projects will continue to work closely with the Placemaking team to ensure that schemes come for review in a timely manner.

The Local Plan is due for review in the next year. Alongside this, the council has recently received a grant from the Digital Planning Improvement Fund which will be a valuable tool to inform the development of the Local Plan. There are also a number of new supplementary planning documents (SPDs), planning strategies and updated design guidance in the pipeline. It would be useful to brief the panel on these updates at an appropriate time, to help the panel align its advice and feedback with these documents. It may also be useful to have review sessions of these policies, in similar arrangement to the reviews of the Staples Corner Masterplan and Design Code SPD.

Brent's Regeneration team has also recently commissioned the Placemaking team to lead on the design of masterplans for two Locally Significant Industrial Sites (LSIS). It will be useful to get the

Image: Unity Place, Gort Scott © Paul Riddle

