



SOMERSET COUNCIL
QUALITY REVIEW PANEL

Terms of reference 2024

IN PARTNERSHIP WITH

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Cover image: East Quay, Watchet by Invisible Studio © Jim Stephenson



1. INTRODUCTION

Somerset Council's vision is to build a greener, more sustainable Somerset. It is seeking to achieve a step change in the quality of new development.

This accords with the National Planning Policy Framework requirement that: "Development that is not well designed should be refused, especially where it fails to reflect local design policies and government guidance on design, taking into account any local design guidance and supplementary planning documents such as design guides and codes" (Para. 139, NPPF, 2023).

The pressure for change and the need to build more homes to address the growing pressures of local housing need is felt across Somerset. There is a need for the local authority to ensure that the quality of all new development is sensitive to the unique context and local character, incorporates the principles of placemaking and ensures viable resilient neighbourhoods.

Somerset is a largely rural county with invaluable diverse landscapes which include Exmoor National Park, Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, precious woodlands, the Somerset levels and moors, and the West Somerset coast. Its settlement patterns vary from dispersed farm groups to sizeable towns, maintaining a relatively modest scale rooted in the landscape. It is important that locally distinctive design solutions are sought to strengthen and enhance the existing sense of place.

The purpose of Somerset's Quality Review Panel is not to duplicate or replace existing mechanisms for securing high quality design, but to provide independent expert design review, in line with Section 12 of the NPPF. This states that: "Local planning authorities should ensure that they have access to...design advice and review arrangements... These are of most benefit if used as early as possible in the evolution of schemes, and are particularly important for significant projects such as large scale housing and mixed use developments." (Para. 138, NPPF, 2023).

By offering advice to applicants during the pre-application process and by commenting on planning applications, the Quality Review Panel supports Somerset's planning officers and planning committees in securing high quality development.



Taunton Museum of Somerset, by Feilden Clegg Bradley Studios



2. PRINCIPLES OF QUALITY REVIEW

Independent – it is conducted by people who are unconnected with the scheme’s promoters and decision makers, and it ensures that conflicts of interest do not arise.

Expert – the advice is delivered by suitably trained people who are experienced in design, who know how to criticise constructively and whose standing and expertise is widely acknowledged.

Multidisciplinary – the advice combines the different perspectives of architects, urban designers, town planners, landscape architects, engineers and other specialist experts to provide a complete, rounded assessment.

Accountable – the design review panel and its advice must be clearly seen to work for the benefit of the public. This should be ingrained within the panel’s terms of reference.

Transparent – the panel’s remit, membership, governance processes and funding should always be in the public domain.

Proportionate – it is used on projects whose significance, either at local or national level, warrants the investment needed to provide the service.

Timely – it takes place as early as possible in the design process, because this can avoid a great deal of wasted time. It also costs less to make changes at an early stage.

Advisory – a design review panel does not make decisions, but it offers impartial advice for the people who do.

Objective – it appraises schemes according to reasoned, objective criteria rather than the stylistic tastes of individual panel members.

Accessible – its findings and advice are clearly expressed in terms that design teams, decision makers and clients can all understand and make use of.

Design Review: Principles and Practice
Design Council CABE / Landscape Institute / RTPI / RIBA (2013)



Taunton County Ground © Ytfc23 / Wikimedia



3. PANEL COMPOSITION

The Quality Review Panel brings together professional experts from a variety of fields. It is made up of 15 members, including the chair.

Quality Review Panel members are chosen to provide a broad range of expertise with particular relevance to Somerset, including:

- architecture
- town planning / urban design
- landscape / ecology
- heritage / townscape
- sustainability / low carbon design
- transport planning / engineering
- inclusive design
- development delivery

Many of those appointed to the Quality Review Panel have expertise and experience in more than one of these areas. The composition of each panel meeting is chosen as far as possible to suit the scheme being reviewed, as well as considering gender balance and diversity.

Membership of the Quality Review Panel is reviewed regularly (at least once a year) to ensure that it provides all the necessary expertise, experience and diversity to undertake its work effectively.

From time to time, it may be of benefit for specialist advice to be provided beyond the Quality Review Panel membership. In such cases, a professional with the relevant expertise may be invited to attend a review meeting, participating in the discussion with the status of an adviser to the panel.



Somerset College, School of Art and Design by Stride Treglown © Faithful & Gould





Charlie Bigham's Quarry Kitchen, by Fielden Fowles © Peter Cook

4. PANEL REMIT

The Quality Review Panel provides independent, objective, expert advice on development proposals across Somerset. It provides advice to scheme promoters and the planning authority as a 'critical friend' to support delivery of high quality development.

Generally, schemes are referred to the panel by planning officers at an early stage to identify and consider the key assumptions of the proposed design. The independent advice given by the panel is likely to be most effective when given before a scheme becomes too fixed. Early engagement with the Quality Review Panel should reduce the risk of delay at application stage by ensuring that designs reach an acceptable standard. The planning authority may also request a review once an application is submitted.

The panel's advice may assist planning officers in negotiating design improvements and may support decision-making by the planning committee, including refusal of planning permission where design quality is not of a sufficiently high standard.

The panel considers significant development proposals in Somerset.

Significance may fall into the following categories.

Significance related to size or use, for example:

- large buildings or groups of buildings
- infrastructure projects such as bridges or transport hubs
- large public realm proposals
- masterplans, design codes or design guidance

Significance related to site, for example:

- proposals affecting sensitive views
- developments with a major impact on their context
- schemes involving significant public investment

Projects may also be referred to the panel by the planning authority at its discretion, for example where it requires advice on:

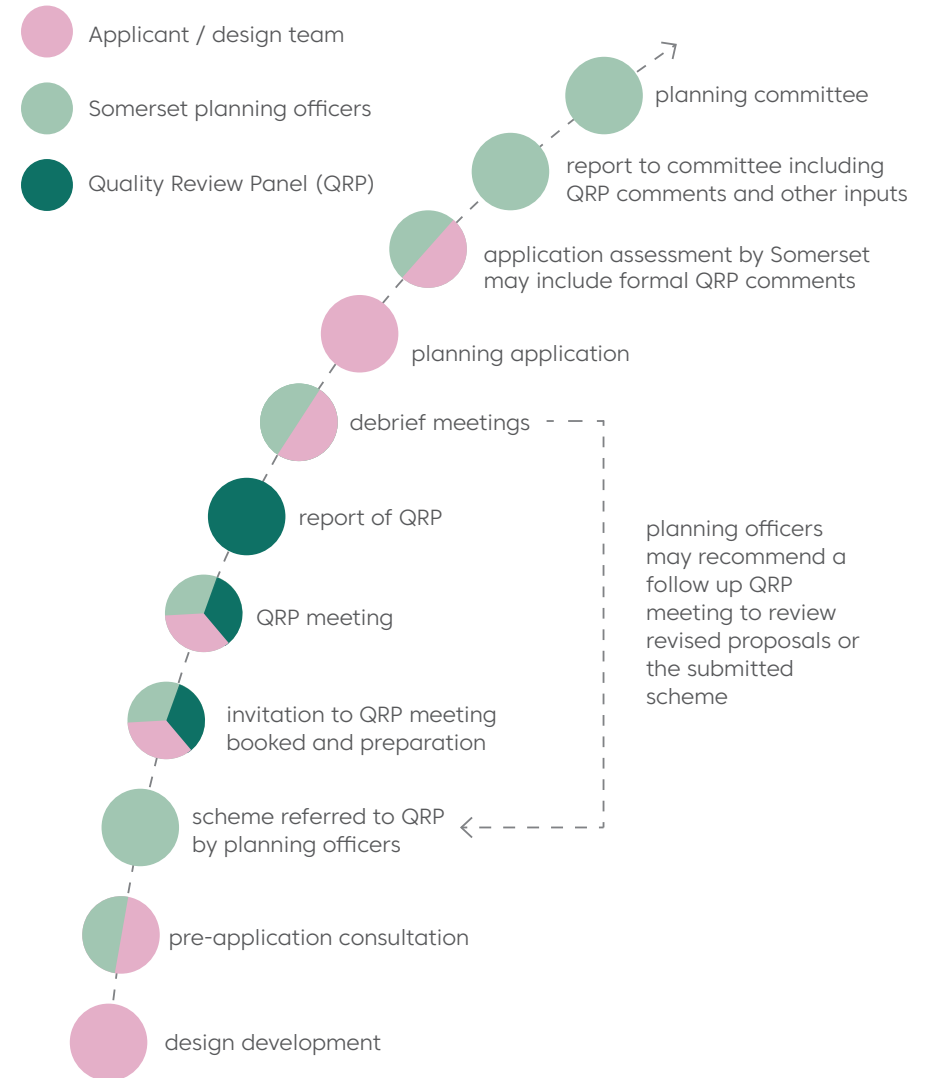
- building typologies, for example single aspect dwellings
- environmental sustainability
- design for climate change adaptation and mitigation
- proposals likely to establish a precedent for future development
- developments out of the ordinary in their context
- schemes with significant impacts on the quality of everyday life
- landscape / public space design

When a proposal is at a pre-application stage, the report is not made public and is only shared with the Council, the applicant and design team, and any other stakeholder bodies that the Council has consulted on the project.

If the proposal is reviewed at an application stage, the report will be a public document and published on the Council’s website. Where the final review of a scheme takes place at a pre-application stage, the report of this meeting may also be made public once an application is submitted.

A diagram showing the role of the Somerset Quality Review Panel in the planning process is shown opposite.

Quality Review Panel's role in the planning process



5. ROLE OF THE QUALITY REVIEW PANEL

The Quality Review Panel provides independent and impartial advice on development proposals, at the request of planning officers, and plays an advisory role in the planning process.

Reviews can be arranged for schemes from RIBA Stage 2 (concept design) onwards, providing advice to the applicant and the planning authority.

It is for Somerset Council's planning officers and the planning committee to decide what weight to place on the panel's comments, balanced with other planning considerations. Applicants should consult Somerset officers following a review to agree how to respond to the panel's advice.

If any points made by the Quality Review Panel require clarification, it is the responsibility of the applicant and their design team to draw this to the attention of the chair of the panel (if during the meeting) or the panel manager, Frame Projects, (if the report requires clarification).

6. INDEPENDENCE CONFIDENCE & PROBITY

Somerset's Quality Review Panel is an independent and impartial service provided to Somerset Council by Frame Projects, an external consultancy.

The processes for managing the Quality Review Panel, appointing members, including the selection of the chair, and the administration of meetings are agreed in partnership with Somerset Council.

Panel members shall keep confidential all information acquired in the course of their role on the panel, with the exception of reports that are in the public domain.

Further details are provided in the confidentiality procedure included at Appendix A.



Aerial photo of Higher Durston © Learning Plock / Wikimedia

7. CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

The Quality Review Panel is intended to provide a constructive forum for applicants, their project teams, and Somerset planning officers seeking advice and guidance on development proposals.

In order to ensure the Quality Review Panel's independence and professionalism, it is essential that members avoid any actual or perceived conflicts of interest that may arise in relation to schemes considered during the meetings that they attend. Minimising the potential for conflicts of interest will be important to the impartiality of the Quality Review Panel.

Members are asked to ensure that any possible conflicts of interest are identified at an early stage, and that appropriate action is taken to resolve them.

Meeting agendas provided in advance of reviews will include sufficient project information to allow any potential conflicts of interest to be identified and declared.

In cases where there is a conflict, a member may be asked to step down from a review. In other cases, a declaration of interest may be sufficient. If in doubt, members should contact Frame Projects to discuss this.

Further details on the process for managing conflicts of interest are provided at Appendix B.

8. FREEDOM OF INFORMATION

As a public authority, the Somerset Council is subject to the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (the Act). All requests made to Somerset Council for information with regard to the Quality Review Panel will be handled according to the provisions of the Act. Legal advice may be required on a case by case basis to establish whether any exemptions apply under the Act.



Lime Tree Square, by FCB Studios © Mike Gove, Photosignals Photography

9. TYPES OF REVIEW

Three types of review are offered:

- a formal review - for schemes with greater impact
- a intermediate review - for schemes with greater impact on smaller sites
- a chair's review - for schemes with more localised impact, or for some previously reviewed schemes

FORMAL REVIEWS

The chair and four panel members attend a formal review. In addition to planning officers, other relevant stakeholders, for example Historic England, may be invited to attend and asked to give their views after the scheme has been presented.

Formal reviews usually take place at a stage when an applicant and design team have decided their preferred option for development of a site, and have sufficient drawings and models to inform a comprehensive discussion.

In advance of the formal review, panel members attend a 15 minute briefing with planning officers on the policy context, and issues arising from pre-application discussions.

At the start of the formal review, planning officers will summarise their panel briefing. The scheme will then be presented by a member of the design team, normally the lead architect, following a brief introduction by the applicant.

Presentations may be made with drawings and / or pdf or PowerPoint and models, as appropriate.

At least one paper copy of the presentation should be provided, for ease of reference during the panel discussion.

Time allocated for formal reviews will depend on the scale of the project but a typical formal review will last 90 minutes: 10 minutes introductions and briefing by planning officers; 25 minutes presentation; 55 minutes discussion and summing up by the chair.

Large projects, for example schemes with several development plots, may be split into smaller elements, to ensure that each component receives adequate time for discussion.



Watchet Harbour © Nilfanion / Wikimedia



INTERMEDIATE REVIEWS

The chair and two panel members attend an intermediate review.

Intermediate reviews can be arranged for medium sized schemes. This review format is intended for projects that are less complex, so that a smaller panel is sufficient to provide design advice. Examples might include residential schemes of 20 units or fewer in size.

Planning officers will be invited, but other stakeholders will not normally attend. However, the planning case officer may brief the panel on any comments made by other stakeholders.

Intermediate reviews usually take place at a stage when an applicant and design team have decided their preferred development approach, and can provide the drawings and models needed to inform a comprehensive discussion.

In advance of the review, panel members attend a 15 minute briefing with planning officers on the policy context, and issues arising from pre-application discussions.

At the start of the intermediate review, planning officers will summarise their panel briefing. The scheme will then be presented by a member of the design team, normally the lead architect, following a brief introduction by the applicant.

A typical intermediate review will last 90 minutes: 10 minutes introductions and briefing by planning officers; 25 minutes presentation; 55 minutes discussion and summing up by the chair.

CHAIR'S REVIEWS

The chair and one panel member attend a chair's review.

In the case of smaller development proposals, or schemes previously presented at a formal review, a chair's review may be arranged to provide advice on the quality of proposals.

Planning officers will be invited, but other stakeholders will not normally attend. However, the planning case officer may brief the panel on any comments made by other stakeholders.

For schemes that are the subject of a current planning application, the presentation should be based on the submitted drawings and documents, either as paper copies or as a pdf or PowerPoint. At least one paper copy of the presentation should be provided, for ease of reference during the panel discussion.

In advance of the review, panel members attend a 15 minute briefing with planning officers on the policy context, and issues arising from pre-application discussions.

At the start of the chair's review, planning officers will summarise their panel briefing. The scheme will then be presented by a member of the design team, normally the lead architect, following a brief introduction by the applicant.

A typical chair's review will last 60 minutes: 10 minutes introductions and briefing by planning officers; 15 minutes presentation; 35 minutes discussion and summing up by the chair.

RETURNING SCHEMES

On occasion, Somerset officers may determine that more than one review is required at pre-application stage. For example, a first review may take place at a strategic design stage, with a further review once more detailed designs are available.

Any subsequent reviews will be charged for at the applicable rate (detailed in Section 14).



UKHO Headquarters, Taunton by AHR





East Quay, Watchet by Invisible Studio © Jim Stephenson

10. SITE VISITS

Wherever possible, a site visit will be arranged for formal and chair's reviews (unless a site visit has already taken place before an earlier review of the scheme). All panel members participating in the review are required to attend. Unless informed otherwise, Frame Projects assumes consent for photographs taken on site or at review meetings to be used on its website and in other publications.

Panel members, representatives of the local planning authority and members of the applicant team should maintain care and awareness of potential hazards for themselves and other attendees during site visits. All those involved should take appropriate action to alert the party of potential risks so that the visit can be paused or terminated if necessary. It is the responsibility of applicant teams to notify Frame Projects in advance of a review meeting if PPE is required on site.

11. MEETING DATES

One Quality Review Panel meeting is provisionally arranged for each month. These may be used for either formal, intermediate or chair's reviews as appropriate. Exceptionally, additional meetings may be required to accommodate the number of schemes requiring a review and / or to meet key dates for specific schemes.

The following dates are currently set for Quality Review Panel meetings during 2024:

- 8 January
- 5 February
- 11 March
- 8 April
- 13 May
- 10 June
- 8 July
- 12 August
- 9 September
- 14 October
- 11 November
- 9 December



Quaperlake Street, Bruton by Emil Eve Architects © Mariell Lind Hansen

12. REVIEW AGENDAS

Agendas will be issued to panel members in advance of each review.

For formal and chair's reviews, a detailed agenda will be provided that includes notes on the planning context, details of the scheme(s) to be considered, applicant and consultant team.

Information provided by the planning case officer will include relevant planning history and planning policies that officers consider essential for assessing the scheme. Advice may be specifically sought on design quality assessed against these policies.

A scheme description provided by the design team will set out factual information about the project. Selected plans and images of the project will also be provided to help to give a sense of the scope and nature of the project under review.

Where a scheme returns for a second or subsequent review, the report of the previous review will be provided with the agenda.

13. PANEL REPORTS

During the Quality Review Panel meeting the panel manager will take notes of the discussion - these form the basis of panel reports. Reports will be drafted, agreed with the chair, and issued within 10 working days.

At pre-application stage, reports will provide clear, independent advice on ways in which the quality of development proposals could be improved, referring where appropriate to Somerset's planning policies in relation to expectations of high quality design.

The Quality Review Panel has an advisory role in Somerset's planning process, and the project team should consult planning officers following a review to agree how to respond to points raised in the report.

Once planning applications are submitted, the report may provide guidance to Somerset's planning committee in determining the planning application. This may include suggesting planning conditions or refusal of planning permission if the design quality is not of an acceptably high standard.

Quality Review Panel reports may be included in committee reports on planning application schemes – in which case Somerset planning officers will place these in the context of other planning matters, which the panel's advice neither replaces nor overrules.

If the proposal is reviewed at an application stage the report will be a public document kept within the proposal's case file and published on Somerset Council's website. Where the final review of a scheme takes place at a pre-application stage, the report of this meeting may also be made public once an application is submitted.

At the end of each year, the Quality Review Panel manager will draft an annual report to evaluate panel process. This will be a brief document describing and reflecting on the panel's activities over the past year - ensuring that, where possible, a full range of panel members is used over the course of the year, and that the panel as a whole remains representative of the diversity of Somerset's population.

As part of this annual review process, a meeting will be held with key Somerset Council officers and the panel chair to discuss the report and consider any recommendations for the following year.



Temple Gardens, Archio © French + Tye



14. QUALITY REVIEW PANEL CHARGES

The charges for Quality Review Panel meetings are benchmarked against comparable panels providing design review services in Brighton & Hove in Sussex, and Folkestone & Hythe in Kent.

Current charges for Somerset Quality Review Panel meetings are:

- £4,300 + VAT formal review
- £3,775 + VAT intermediate review
- £2,850 + VAT chair's review

If the council and applicant agree that an in person meeting including a site visit is necessary, an additional charge will apply: £1,200 for a formal review; £700 for an intermediate review; £450 for a chair's review.

Applicants are referred to the Quality Review Panel by Somerset Council as an external service and fees are paid by the applicant to Frame Projects for delivering this service. If required, the cost of venue hire, and transport from the nearest convenient station to the site visit, would be in addition to the charges above. However, where possible we will book meeting rooms at Council offices.

Payment should be made in advance of the review, and the review may be cancelled if payment is not received five days before the meeting. Full details will be provided when an invitation to the Quality Review Panel is confirmed.

Where a scheduled review is subsequently cancelled or postponed by the applicant, an administrative charge will be applied:

- 50% of full cost : less than two weeks before scheduled review
- £725 + VAT : between two and four weeks before scheduled review



Vivary Park Fountain, Taunton © Julie Anne Workman / Wikimedia



15. QUALITY REVIEW PANEL MEMBERSHIP

The Quality Review Panel brings together 15 professionals, covering a range of disciplines and expertise. For each review, members will be selected from among the people listed below, according to the requirements of the project being reviewed.



Andrew Beharrell (chair)
Architect

Andrew Beharrell has designed and delivered many award-winning projects throughout his 35 years with Pollard Thomas Edwards until he retired his role in 2020. Andrew's architectural and masterplanning experience ranges from urban regeneration to new rural settlements, and across the housing spectrum to embrace education and town centre mixed-use projects. He is a regular industry commentator and has co-authored a series of influential publications on housing, planning and regeneration issues.



Irfan Alam
Architect
Associate Director, Kjellander Sjöberg

Irfan Alam is an associate director at Kjellander Sjöberg, specialising in innovative architecture shaped by circular sustainable principles and human-scale, people-focused masterplans. Irfan has extensive experience of complex mixed-use residential developments, bespoke higher education & cultural projects, and urban scale creative masterplans. Key projects include urban regeneration at Neptune Wharf for Peabody / Hill, the Royal College of Art's Creative Campus in Battersea, and a major new city quarter masterplan in Northeast Cambridge for U+I/TOWN.
www.kjellandersjoberg.se



Helen Allen
Inclusive design expert
Director, Hada

Helen Allen is an inclusive design consultant with over 20 years' experience in the field. She has developed a specialism in strategic masterplanning, urban design and public realm. She previously worked as an access consultant at the Royal National Institute of Blind People (RNIB), and with the Centre for Accessible Environments (CAE) and more recently was Practice Director at David Bonnett Associates until her relocation to the South West.
www.hada.co.uk





Chris Askew
Architect
Director, Askew Cavanna Architects

Chris Askew is an experienced architect and founder of Askew Cavanna Architects in Bristol. Working on projects throughout the South West, the practice specialises in sustainable and low energy design. Alongside this, Chris has taught at UCL and Birmingham City University, and has examined at a number of universities, as well as being a Prescribed Examiner for the Architects Registration Board. Chris has been involved in several local initiatives and is currently a Trustee of the Wardrobe Theatre.
www.askewarchitects.co.uk



Lise Benningen
Landscape architect
Associate Director, Arup

Lise Benningen is a landscape architect with over 15 years' experience in various scales of award-winning projects, from 'Gardens by the Bay', in Singapore, to a local art-based landscape event 'Forest of Imagination' in Bath. She led the landscape team at Grant Associates for the Temple Quarter Enterprise Campus, Bristol. She runs the Landscape Architects Declare Steering Group, sits on the Construction Declares Steering Group and is the Landscape Institute representative for the Construction Industry Council (CIC) Climate Panel. www.arup.com



Marie Burns
Landscape architect
Consultant

Marie Burns is a landscape architect, urban designer, transport planner and author, who co-founded the award-winning practice Burns + Nice. Her skills include: the design and implementation of area-wide masterplans; environmental design associated with sustainability; habitat creation and hydrology; design guides within heritage settings; public realm schemes; and inclusive community consultation. Marie is a panel member of the Haringey, Havering and Somerset Quality Review Panels.





Gabriela Costa

Sustainability expert
Associate Sustainability Consultant, Useful
Simple Trust

Gabriela Costa is an Associate Sustainability Consultant, leading the Sustainable Places team within Expedition Engineering and Useful Projects. She is a Chartered Engineer (MCIBSE) with over eight years' experience in building performance analysis, sustainable and low carbon design, environmental comfort and wellbeing strategies. Gabriela co-authored CIBSE TM69 Dynamic thermal modelling of simple blinds (2022) and is an active member of the Building Simulation Group.

www.expedition.uk.com



James Grayley

Architect
Director, James Grayley Architects

James Grayley is Director of James Grayley Architects, an award winning practice with a focus on delivering well-crafted housing, community and cultural projects. Previously an Associate Director at Dow Jones Architects, James worked on a diverse range of projects with clients including Tate Britain, the V&A, and strategic masterplan projects for several London boroughs and the GLA. James has taught at a number of universities in the UK and Ireland and is currently a visiting critic at schools of architecture in the South West and Wales and an RIBA Future Architects mentor.

www.jamesgrayley.com



Clare Harpur

Landscape architect
Associate, LDA Design

With over 30 years' experience in landscape architecture and environmental planning, Clare Harpur has a keen understanding of what makes places distinctive. She co-founded LDA Design's Exeter studio and has worked extensively on mixed-use and infrastructure developments, prepared design and best practice guidance and advised on landscape policy and protected landscapes. Clare specialises in landscape character assessment and LVIA, and strives to ensure that change is designed in a way that responds creatively to the qualities of its landscape or urban context.

www.lda-design.co.uk





James Howard
Development delivery
Development Director, Studio Hive

James Howard is Development Director at Studio HIVE, an innovative Bristol based property developer. He previously worked at Urban Splash, Gleeds, JLL and Chesterton. A qualified Building Surveyor, James has worked as a client on many mixed use, heritage-led projects including Lakeshore, Bristol and Royal William Yard, Plymouth. His recent projects include the redevelopment of Silverthorne Lane in Bristol. He is member of the South West Design Review Panel and Torbay Design Review Panel.
www.studio-hive.co.uk



Miranda MacLaren
Architect
Director, Morris+Company

In her role as Director at Morris+Company, Miranda MacLaren shares the responsibility for ongoing strategic management of the practice and attends weekly design reviews across all live projects. She has extensive housing and estate regeneration experience and has worked on schemes ranging widely in scale and typology, including homeless shelters, affordable housing, specialist need housing, student housing, market and mixed-tenure housing, senior living and co-living. She also sits on the Design Review Panels for Harrow, Hounslow and previously at Merton.
www.morrisandcompany.com



David Milner
Urban designer
Deputy Director, Create Streets

David Milner is Deputy Director at Create Streets and is currently leading on a wide range of community engagement, masterplanning, street design, regeneration, and local government consultation projects. Previously David worked for six years as an officer and pilot in the Royal Air Force. David is a member of the Academy of Urbanism and writes about the impact of movement and infrastructure on urban design.
www.createstreets.com





Prachi Rampuria

Urban and architectural designer,
engagement and co-design expert
Director, EcoResponsive Environments

Prachi Rampuria is cofounding director at EcoResponsive Environments, an award-winning architectural and urban design practice with a focus on innovation in low carbon design. She has led two international RIBA competition-winning projects, including a strategic masterplan north of Letchworth Garden City and a feasibility masterplan for Heath Business and Technical Park in Runcorn which one a Golden Pineapple in the Future Place Category of Pineapple Awards 2022 and a National Urban Design Award in 2023. She is also co-writing a book titled 'EcoResponsive Environments'.

www.ecoresponsiveenvironments.com



Vivienne Ramsey

Town planner and urban designer
Consultant

Vivienne Ramsey has over 40 years' experience as a town planner. As Director of Planning, Policy and Decisions at the London Legacy Development Corporation, she established and led it as a local planning authority, and was involved in the development of its Local Plan. She had previously been the Head of Development and Building Control at the London Borough of Newham. Vivienne is also a member of the Harlow and Gilston and Epping Forest District Quality Review Panels.



Alan Swan

Highways engineer and transport planner
Director of Transport, Stantec

Alan Swan has been delivering land development and infrastructure projects for over 25 years. As a resident of Taunton Deane for the past 20 years, he is passionate about local projects which leave a lasting legacy for future generations, and making the places in which we live, work, and play more functional and sustainable for all users and modes. Alan is also a member of the Devon and Somerset Design Review Panel.

www.stantec.com



16. KEY REFERENCES

Somerset Council

Somerset Council came into being on April 1 2023. The new unitary council brings together the services previously provided by the four district councils in Somerset (Mendip, Sedgemoor, Somerset West and Taunton, and South Somerset) alongside the services provided by Somerset County Council.

Somerset Council will be progressing a new Somerset Local Plan. In the interim, existing Local Plans remain in place for the individual geographical areas of the former district councils.

A statement summarising the planning policy documents relating to Somerset Council can be found here:

www.somerset.gov.uk/planning-buildings-and-land/adopted-local-plans/

Principles of design review

Design Review: Principles and Practice, Design Council

www.designcouncil.org.uk/fileadmin/uploads/dc/Documents/Design%20Review_Principles%20and%20Practice_May2019.pdf



Beezantium, The Newt by Invisible Studios © Jim Stephenson

APPENDIX A

Procedure regarding confidentiality

The Somerset Quality Review Panel provides a constructive and reliable forum for applicants and their design teams to seek guidance at an early stage, when the panel's advice can have the most impact. It is therefore essential that appropriate levels of confidentiality are maintained. The following procedure shall apply.

1. Panel meetings are only to be attended by panel members, Somerset officers, and officers from stakeholder organisations involved in the project, for example statutory consultees, as well as the applicant and their design team. If any additional individual is to attend, it should be approved by the Quality Review Panel manager.
2. At all times panel members shall keep strictly confidential all information acquired during the course of their role on the panel and shall not use that information for their own benefit, nor disclose it to any third party (with the exception of reports that are in the public domain – see points 5 and 6).
3. The panel's advice is provided in the form of a report written by the Quality Review Panel manager, containing key points arrived at in discussion by the panel. If any applicant, architect or agent approaches a panel member for advice on a scheme subject to review (before, during or after), they should decline to comment and refer the inquiry to the panel manager.
4. Following the meeting, the Quality Review Panel manager will write a draft report, circulate it to the chair for comments and then make any amendments. The final report will then be distributed to all relevant stakeholders.
5. If the proposal is at a pre-application stage, the report is not made public and is only shared with Somerset Council, the applicant and design team, and any other stakeholder bodies that the Council has consulted on the project.
6. If the proposal is reviewed at an application stage, the report will be a public document kept within the proposal's case file and published on Somerset Council's website. Where the final review of a scheme takes place at a pre-application stage, the report of this meeting may also be made public once an application is submitted.
7. If a panel member wishes to share any Quality Review Panel report with a third party, they must seek approval from the Quality Review Panel manager, who will confirm whether or not the report is public.



APPENDIX B

Procedure regarding conflicts of interest

To ensure the integrity and impartiality of advice given by the Quality Review Panel, potential conflicts of interest will be checked before each review meeting. The following process will apply.

1. All panel members will be required to declare any conflicts of interest.
2. Panel members are notified of the schemes coming before the panel at least a week in advance. It is expected that at this time panel members should declare any possible interest in a project to the Quality Review Panel manager.
3. The Quality Review Panel manager, in collaboration with the panel chair and Somerset Council staff, will determine if the conflict of interest requires the panel member to step down from the meeting, or if a declaration of interest would be sufficient.
4. In general, a panel member should not attend a review meeting if they have:
 - a financial, commercial or professional interest in a project that will be reviewed, its client and / or its site;
 - a financial, commercial or professional interest in a project, its client and / or a site that is adjacent to the project that will be reviewed or upon which the project being reviewed will have a material impact;
 - a personal relationship with an individual or group involved in the project, or a related project, where that relationship prevents the panel member from being objective.
5. Specific examples include: current work with the client for the project being reviewed; current design work on a neighbouring site; previous involvement in a procurement process to appoint a design team for the project.
6. Personal interests that should be declared, but which would not normally prevent a panel member participating in a review, might include current work with a member of the consultant team for a project that will be reviewed. In this situation, the interest will be noted at the beginning of the review, discussed with the presenting design teams and formally recorded in the review report.
7. If, subsequent to a review of a scheme in which a panel member has participated, they are approached by any applicant, architect or agent to ascertain a potential interest in contributing to the project team for that scheme, they must decline. Professional work in a scheme previously reviewed by a panel member is not permitted, either directly by the panel member or by any organisation that employs them, or that they own.
8. Panel members are not restricted from professionally working on projects within the area. However, if such a scheme comes up for review, that panel member should not be involved and must declare a conflict of interest.
9. Councillors and council employees are not eligible to be members of their own authority's panel.

The table on the following page provides a guide to assessing whether or not a Quality Review Panel member has a conflict of interest.



Current commercial situation

If the panel member is currently working...

for the client on a different project	●
through a direct appointment to a member of the presenting team	●
with a member of the presenting team, but not appointed by them	●
on the site in a competing bid, or has a business connection to the site	●
on a neighbouring site where the two projects have a bearing on each other	●
in the near vicinity if the projects have a bearing on each other	●
for the local authority on another project	●

Past commercial situation

If the panel member has had previous involvement...

with the project (same client and brief)	●
with the site (different client and brief)	●
on a neighbouring site where the two projects have a bearing on each other	●
with the client	●
with a consultant on the project	●

Future commercial situation

If the panel member is...

involved in a procurement process for the client or the site	●
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Familial situation

If the panel member...

has a familial relationship with the client, consultants or site owners	●
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Informal situation

If the panel member...

is a friend of a member of the applicant team	●
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Formal situation

If the panel member...

presents their own scheme to other panel members	●
previously worked for a company that is part of the presenting team, more than one year ago	●
holds an elected position, or is a member of a society, that is impacted by the project – whether paid or unpaid.	●
has a home or business directly affected by a project	●

Key

Conflict of interest - meaning the panel member must be stood down from the review.	●
Declaration of interest - there is the potential for others to incorrectly perceive that a conflict exists. A declaration should be made at the start of the review meeting, and included in the meeting report.	●
No conflict of interest - either real or perceived, and the panel member is free to take part in the review.	●

