REDBRIDGE DESIGN REVIEW PANEL

ANNUAL REPORT

IN PARTNERSHIP WITH

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London Borough of Redbridge

INTRODUCTION

The Redbridge Design Review Panel was set up in 2019 by Frame Projects on behalf of the London Borough of Redbridge. It is co-chaired by Peter Bishop and Richard Lavington and includes 21 professional experts, selected through an open recruitment process in collaboration with Redbridge officers.

Terms of Reference, available via the Council's web site, set out the role and remit of the panel, and the way in which it supports the planning process. Schemes requiring 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 advise the planning committee on submitted schemes.

The Redbridge Design Review Panel advised on 20 schemes in the year from October 2019 to October 2020. Six 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.

Frame Projects has developed a process for monitoring and evaluating the impact of design review panels. This process will allow 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 will also provide public transparency and allow for continual improvement of our services. This process includes collecting quantitative information based on the reviews carried out from October 2019 to October 2020. 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 October 2019 to October 2020

PANEL

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

REVIEW TOTALS

Total number of reviews

25

Number of follow up / second reviews

6

Number of site visits (in person)

4

Number of formal reviews (5 panel members)

19

Planning application review (1-2 panel members)

5

Bespoke reviews

1

PANEL COMPOSITION

PANEL MEMBERS USED THIS YEAR

No. of different panel members used

21

Male panel members

63%

Female panel members

37%

BAME panel members

9%

PANEL EXPERTISE USED

Urban design

31

Landscape

9

Architecture

29

Engineering

0

Heritage / conservation

4

Sustainability

3

PROPOSALS REVIEWED

APPLICANT TYPE

Private developer	Local authority	Public private partnership
11	14	0

STAGE OF PROPOSAL

Pre application	Planning application submitted	Amendment to approved application
22	3	0

TYPE OF PROPOSAL

Masterplan	Mixed use
2	6
Policy or strategic document	Residential (1-50 units)
0	10
Residential (50+ units)	Commercial
7	0
Public realm	Education
0	0

Frame Projects has worked with the local planning authority to identify schemes to assess as part of the monitoring and evaluation process. This consists of schemes that have been reviewed by the Design Review Panel, where a planning decision was determined between October 2019 to October 2020.

The schemes used for feedback in this evaluation are:

- The Valentine Pub (planning application reference: 2708/19)
- 17-23 & 22-26, Clements Road
  (planning application reference: 4124/19)
- 480 – 482 Ley Street (planning application reference: 1621/20)
- Loxford Lane (planning application reference: 1189/20)
- Montrose College (planning application reference: 0798/190)

Anonymous survey responses were collected from the applicants (planning agent and lead architects), panel members who attended the reviews, and local authority representatives (planning officer and design officer) 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 asking them to take part in the survey and given two weeks to provide feedback with one follow up reminder.

APPLICANT QUESTIONNAIRE

8 applicants were contacted twice to complete the feedback questionnaire.
3 out of 8 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 Quality Review Panel?
7. Any other comments?

APPLICANT FEEDBACK

The applicant response rate was low with only three out of eight responding. The feedback was mixed, for example one respondent found the process "challenging but ultimately constructive''. Most respondents felt their review had been conducted in a constructive manner, with clear information prior to the review, and they felt that advice from the panel had helped to improve their proposal. One applicant reported that they found the second meeting to discuss their scheme at a chair's review particularly useful. Another applicant reflected that reports of the meetings accurately captured the panel's advice but stressed the importance of panel member continuity for returning schemes.

LOCAL AUTHORITY QUESTIONNAIRE

6 local planning authority representatives were contacted twice to complete the feedback questionnaire. 4 out of 6 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

Four out of six local authority representatives approached responded. Local authority representatives were happy with the review process and the panel's contribution. Respondents found the panel's comments, during the review and in the subsequent report, clear and constructive. They agreed that the panel's advice had helped support negotiations on design quality with applicants, and in most cases referred directly to the panel's comments in officer's planning reports. One respondent specified that they valued the design review panel's understanding of the time sensitive nature of the project.

PANEL QUESTIONNAIRE

18 panel members were contacted twice to complete the feedback questionnaire. 9 out of 18 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

Nine out of eighteen panel members approached responded, all of whom were generally positive about the review sessions, and felt they were able to contribute their advice fully with that advice accurately captured in panel reports. Respondents found briefings provided by officers useful, with one respondent suggesting this focus more on the discussion and less on the briefing element.

Some panel members thought there were issues with the volume of information provided prior to and during review sessions. Information distributed prior to review meetings is limited to ensure manage the time for panel members to prepare, and ensure they come to the meeting with an open mind. However, Frame Projects will review guidance given to applicants on information to present at review meetings to ensure information presented is sufficient and enables a thorough review.

EMERGING ISSUES AND NEXT STEPS

In analysing the panel's composition, it is clear that both the gender and BAME diversity of the panel require improvement. When the panel was established in September 2019 it was vital to get the mix of panel members skills correct to ensure the panel could offer the necessary support to planning officers. In September 2020 at an annual progress meeting, it was agreed there was opportunity to review the panel's composition to achieve better diversity in line with the borough the panel represents. In late 2020, Frame Projects ran an open recruitment process to update the membership of a number of its panels. As a result of this process six new panel members were appointed to the Redbridge Design Review Panel. The panel is now 45% female, 55% male, and 26% of the panel are from a black, Asian and minority ethnic background.

In addition to the feedback included in the questionnaire responses, Frame Projects is aware that Redbridge Council has declared a climate emergency. In response to this, Frame Projects recruited additional panel members with sustainability expertise and is planning a climate emergency training event for the panel members and planning officers it works with. The event will be organised in collaboration with the London Energy Transformation Initiative (LETI) who recently published a Climate Emergency Design Guide.