

GREENWICH
DESIGN REVIEW
PANEL

1 JANUARY 2024
-
31 DECEMBER 2024

ANNUAL
REPORT

IN PARTNERSHIP WITH

Frame Projects
Unit 15 Waterside
44-48 Wharf Road
London N1 7UX
020 8164 9980
office@frame-projects.co.uk
frame-projects.co.uk

INTRODUCTION

The Greenwich Design Review Panel was set up in 2023 by Frame Projects on behalf of the Royal Borough of Greenwich. It is chaired by Jay Gort, founding director of Gort Scott, and includes 25 professional members, selected through an open recruitment process in collaboration with Greenwich officers.

Terms of Reference, available on the planning authority's web site, 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 Greenwich Design Review Panel has advised on 12 schemes in the year from January 2024 to December 2024. 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, 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.

Schemes that include a significant element of masterplanning or placemaking are encouraged to present to the panel at an early stage in the design process. This allows the panel to provide feedback on the strategic aspects of a scheme while they are still evolving. Further reviews may be required to ensure that all design aspects are adequately addressed.

PANEL

Authority

Royal Borough of Greenwich

Review Panel name

Greenwich Design Review Panel

Panel management

Frame Projects

Contact name for panel

Ed Bailey, Frame Projects

Contact email address

Edward@frame-projects.co.uk

Image: Greenwich Design Review Panel site visit © Frame Projects



REVIEW TOTALS

Total number
of reviews

12

Number of first
reviews

10

Number of follow-up
reviews

2

Number of
site visits

10

Full reviews
(chair plus four panel members)

9

Intermediate reviews
(chair plus four panel members)

1

Chair's reviews
(chair plus one panel members)

1

Bespoke reviews
(chair plus five panel members)

1

PANEL COMPOSITION

PANEL MEMBERS USED THIS YEAR

No. of different panel
members used

18

Male panel members

56%

Female panel members

44%

Diverse ethnic background
(based on 24 diversity forms)

22%

PANEL EXPERTISE USED THIS YEAR

Architecture

24

Urban design /
townscape

3

Heritage /
conservation

9

Sustainability

10

Landscape /
public realm

12

Other

1

Most panel members have more than one area of expertise e.g an architect may also have experience of masterplanning, sustainability or design in historic contexts.

PROPOSALS REVIEWED

APPLICANT TYPE

Private developer

12

STAGE OF PROPOSAL

Pre-application

12

TYPE OF PROPOSAL

Education

2

Residential (1-50 units)

2

Mixed use

8

Meridian Gate, Kidbrooke Village © CZWG Architects



EMERGING THEMES AND ISSUES

During 2024, the Greenwich Design Review Panel has reviewed a wide range of proposals, the majority from private developers, including major mixed- use schemes, student housing schemes, co-living schemes, and sites in or impacting sensitive historic settings and buildings.

Some key emerging themes and issues have been summarised below.

Scale of change in Woolwich

Woolwich is designated as an opportunity area in the London Plan, and it is undergoing significant transformation to provide new homes, offices, public spaces, and facilities, as well as improvements to existing spaces and amenities.

While new development can deliver benefits, accommodating growth of this magnitude necessitates careful planning. Developments like the regeneration of Woolwich Arsenal were carried out under a masterplan to assist and coordinate change, but many of the new developments the panel has commented on, such as along Beresford Street, lack a similar design framework to guide a cohesive approach across Woolwich.

The panel has advocated for a coherent strategy to help examine the individual and collective impact of proposals. It is keen to assist the Council in developing a clear and robust vision for Woolwich, and to help strengthen its mechanisms to secure high-quality design.

Sustainability

The Council declared a climate emergency in 2019, and it has set an ambitious target to reach net zero carbon emissions by 2030. However, the influence of sustainability on proposals, beyond meeting minimum standards, is often limited in the schemes the panel has commented on.

The panel has encouraged applicants to define clearer and more ambitious sustainability commitments, and to consider sustainability earlier in the design process. Challenging assumptions regarding demolition, encouraging the re-use of materials, and exploring opportunities to harness solar gain have been regular discussion topics.

Changes to approved schemes

Several schemes the panel has commented on in 2024 have focussed on alterations to previous approvals. A common reason for the required changes has been the need to address a requirement for a second staircase in all new residential buildings over 18 metres, which has implications for the design and viability of schemes.

The panel has supported officers to evaluate the impact of proposed changes, including where more development is required to overcome viability challenges. The panel has encouraged applicants to adopt innovative and sensitive approaches to increasing density, and to identify opportunities to deliver more public benefit to mitigate the impact of the additional development.

Where schemes relate to historical approvals, the panel has urged applicants to embrace approaches which reflect current national and local policies on design quality and sustainability. Embracing best practice approaches to deliver projects that are long-lasting.

Co- living and student accommodation

Co-living and purpose-built student accommodation have been common residential typologies in several schemes reviewed by the panel in 2024, mainly providing single occupancy rooms and a mixture of shared internal and external amenity spaces.

High-quality interior spaces, such as spacious internal lobbies, a range of communal amenity spaces, and clearly defined private thresholds, have been promoted by the panel. Additionally, it has encouraged applicants to think about how their proposals can benefit the wider community, including publicly accessible uses which can help meet a local need.

Conservation and heritage

Many of the schemes reviewed by the panel have an impact on the Borough's rich and diverse heritage, including alterations to listed buildings and development in conservation areas. The panel has encouraged applicants to assess each site's heritage significance, and develop proposals that respond to this, to create more characterful and place driven development.

FORWARD LOOK

In early 2025, the panel has welcomed the opportunity to support the to develop a supplementary planning document for the Woolwich Barracks area. With the landowner and Council working closely together, this is a positive and proactive approach which will help to establish key constraints and drivers for future development, including clear and ambitious expectations for sustainability and design quality.

In a similarly proactive approach, the Council is planning on developing urban regeneration frameworks for Abbey Wood, Plumstead and Woolwich in 2025/26. The panel is ready to support the Council as it develops the future vision and strategy for these important local centres. The frameworks should provide a help tool for officers to secure high quality design and ensure that new development individually and collectively delivers significant benefit for the community.

During 2025, Frame Projects and the panel will continue to support Royal Borough of Greenwich officers and members to build an expectation of high quality and place driven design.

Image: Abbey Wood Elizabeth Line Station, Fereday Pollard © Richard Lewisohn

