



SOMERSET QUALITY REVIEW PANEL

Terms of reference 2025

FRAME PROJECTS

In partnership with
Somerset Council

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Cover image: East Quay, Watchet, 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, Feilden Clegg Bradley Studios

2. PRINCIPLES OF DESIGN 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. Members are chosen to provide a broad range of expertise with particular relevance to Somerset, including:

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

Many of those appointed to the Quality Review Panel have expertise and experience in more than one of these areas. At least 50 percent of the panel live and/or work in the southwest. 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, Stride Treglown © Faithful & Gould



Charlie Bigham's Quarry Kitchen, Feilden Fowles © Peter Cook

4. ROLE OF THE 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).

5. 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 IN THE PLANNING PROCESS

-  Council pre-app process
-  Quality Review Panel
-  Planning submission

Design review advice is most effective when it is well-integrated into the local planning authority process. It is for planning officers to decide which schemes would benefit from the panel's advice, and refer them for a review. Frame Projects then takes responsibility for arranging the meeting, liaising with both the planning authority and applicant. A report on the panel's comments is

issued to all those attending, to inform continuing pre-application discussions. Officers may refer the scheme back to the panel for a follow up review, at the next stage of design development. Once the scheme is submitted for planning approval, the panel's analysis of design quality is intended to support the committee in its decision making.





East Quay Watchet, Invisible Studio © Jim Stephenson

6. INDEPENDENCE & 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 in Section 14.

7. 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.

8. TYPES OF REVIEW

Three types of review are offered:

Full review - chair plus four panel members, typically 90 minutes.

Intermediate review - chair plus two panel members, typically 75 minutes.

Chair's review - chair plus one panel member, typically 60 minutes.

FULL REVIEWS

For schemes with significant impact, requiring a broad range of panel expertise, a full review can be arranged to provide advice on the quality of proposals.

In addition to planning officers, other relevant stakeholders, for example Historic England, may be invited to attend and asked to give their views as background to the review meeting.

Full 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 full 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 full 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 full reviews will depend on the scale of the project but a typical full 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.



Somerset Quality Review Panel site visit © Frame Projects

INTERMEDIATE REVIEWS

Intermediate reviews can be arranged for projects with localised impact that require a range of panel expertise. This type of review can also be appropriate at an early design stage, for example to provide advice on development strategy, or to provide focused advice, for example on a design code.

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.

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.

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.

A typical intermediate review will last 75 minutes: 10 minutes introductions and briefing by planning officers; 20 minutes presentation; 45 minutes discussion and summing up by the chair.

CHAIR'S REVIEWS

For schemes with more localised impact, or for some previously reviewed schemes, 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

Planning 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.

For masterplan scale schemes including several development plots, we recommend a discussion between the planning authority, applicant and panel manager to agree how best to structure the review process. Different types of review may be appropriate at different stages in the evolution of the project. Bespoke full day reviews can be offered for large scale / complex schemes.

Subsequent reviews will be charged for at the applicable rate (detailed in Section 13).



Somerset Quality Review Panel site visit © Frame Projects

9. SITE VISITS

Wherever possible, a site visit will be arranged for review meetings (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.

10. MEETING DATES

One Quality Review Panel meeting date is provisionally arranged for each month. 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 2025:

- 13 January
- 10 February
- 10 March
- 14 April
- 12 May
- 9 June
- 7 July
- 4 August
- 1 September
- 13 October
- 10 November
- 8 December



Quaperlake Street Bruton, Emil Eve Architects © Mariell Lind Hansen

11. REVIEW AGENDAS

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

For each review meeting, 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.

12. 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.



Lime Tree Square, Feilden Clegg Bradley Studios © Mike Gove, Photosignals Photography

13. 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:

• Full review	in person	£5,500 + VAT
	online	£4,300 + VAT
• Intermediate review	in person	£4,475 + VAT
	online	£3,775 + VAT
• Chair's review	in person	£3,300 + VAT
	online	£2,850 + VAT

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
- £800 + VAT : between two and four weeks before scheduled review



Somerset Quality Review Panel site visit © Frame Projects



14. 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.

15. 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.	●

16. PANEL MEMBERSHIP

The Quality Review Panel brings together 21 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 and urban designer
Senior Advisor, Pollard Thomas Edwards

Andrew Beharrell designed and delivered many award-winning projects during 35 years with Pollard Thomas Edwards until he retired from a practice leadership 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, including PTE's own property developments. He is a regular industry commentator and has co-authored a series of influential publications on housing, planning and regeneration issues.
www.pollardthomasedwards.co.uk



Irfan Alam
Architect
Senior Associate, Burrell Foley Fischer

Irfan Alam is Senior Associate at Burrell Foley Fischer, specialists in projects for culture, heritage and learning. With over 20 years of senior-level experience across leading architectural studios in the UK and Scandinavia, Irfan has led the design and delivery of award-winning major cultural, mixed-use residential, and higher education projects, working collaboratively within the public and private sectors. Drawing on diverse perspectives from international practice he also brings urban design experience shaped by circular sustainable principles and human-scale, people-focused masterplans.
bff-architects.com



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.



Gabriela Costa

Sustainability expert
Associate Sustainability Consultant, Useful
Simple Trust

Gabriela Costa is an associate leading the sustainable places team within Expedition Engineering and Useful Projects. She is a chartered engineer (MCIBSE) and Regenerative Practitioner™ with over ten 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



Will Day

Landscape architect
Associate, Churchman Thornhill Finch

Will Day is an Associate at Churchman Thornhill Finch with two decades of experience as a landscape architect having worked on schemes in the UK and abroad, including Gardens by the Bay, Singapore. A former Design Council Expert, he believes that good landscape design should be socially inclusive, environmentally sensitive, technically hardworking and imbued with a sense of wonder. He aims to push designs beyond the expected norms using natural systems to help meet the challenges of today's world and work within planetary boundaries.
www.churchmanthornhillfinch.co.uk



Keith French

Landscape architect
Director, Grant Associates

Keith French joined Grant Associates in 1997 and has contributed to many of its landscape and urban design projects. He played a key role in the Gardens by the Bay project in Singapore. Recent work includes urban regeneration mixed use schemes, transport infrastructure, new city parks and public realm strategies.
www.grant-associates.uk.com



Sam Goss

Architect

Founding Director, Barefoot Architects

Sam Goss is a chartered architect and founding director at Barefoot Architects, with over 15 years' experience in socially and environmentally driven design. He specialises in innovative forms of affordable housing, co-housing and community-led projects, with award-winning work that balances creativity, sustainability and inclusivity. Skilled in client engagement and strategic design, Sam has led innovative schemes such as Hazelmead, winner of the National Housing Design Awards 2025. Alongside practice, he writes, speaks and advocates for systemic change in how new homes and communities are created. www.barefootarchitects.co.uk



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



Anthony Hollingsworth

Town planner

Former Director of Planning Policy & Decisions, LLDC

Anthony Hollingsworth is a town planner with 30 years' experience working at both strategic and local planning authorities in London and Bath on development management, plan-making and infrastructure delivery. As Director of Planning Policy & Decisions at the London Legacy Development Corporation, he led the statutory planning function for the regeneration of the neighbourhoods in and around Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park. Prior to this, he was at the Olympic Delivery Authority, managing the planning functions for the delivery of the venues and infrastructure for the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games.



Simon Kale

Landscape

Managing Director, Nicholas Pearson Associates

Simon Kale is a chartered landscape architect with over 30 years' experience in a wide range of development types including residential and mixed-use schemes, leisure, commercial, infrastructure, and public realm projects. Inputs include strategic advice as well as involvement in projects throughout the planning and construction process. Key expertise includes Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment, environmental design, and developments in sensitive locations. Understanding the site and development context and providing sensitive design solutions is a fundamental aspect of Simon's approach to each project.

www.npaconsult.co.uk



Miranda MacLaren

Architect

Director, Orms

In her role as Director at Orms, 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 Tower Hamlets, Harrow, Hounslow and previously at Merton.

www.orms.co.uk



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.ecoreponsiveenvironments.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



Jonathan Tricker

Transport planner and civil engineer
Placemaking Director, PJA

Jonathan Tricker is the Sector Director for Placemaking at PJA, with over 28 years of experience in transport, engineering, and placemaking. A seasoned project director, Jon excels in project management, movement strategies, street design, and development planning, frequently leading large interdisciplinary teams. His expertise lies in understanding the interplay between transport, urban design, spatial planning, and delivery, honed through numerous complex urban development projects across the UK and Ireland.
www.pja.co.uk



Matt Vaudin

Architect and sustainability expert
Director, Stonewood Design

Matt Vaudin has specialist expertise in sustainable design, and has delivered a number of highly regarded RIBA Award winning buildings. Matt previously worked at Feilden Clegg Bradley Studios, Arup Associates and Battle McCarthy Environmental Engineers. He has lectured internationally over the years on environmental design and is a design critic at the University of Bath School of Architecture and Falmouth University. Matt is currently working with Real World Studios delivering an innovative project of 20 new homes and co-working space.
www.stonewooddesign.co.uk



Mark Wray

Architect and heritage expert
Director, Mark Wray Architects

Mark Wray is the founder of Mark Wray Architects, an award-winning practice which specialises in the adaption of historic buildings, sensitive renovation projects and contextual modern architecture. Mark has a background in heritage and conservation projects and his recent experience includes projects at Wales's oldest art gallery near Pwllheli, and the conversion of a Grade II former Friends meeting house into an independent bookshop in Bath. Mark has been a part-time lecturer in architecture at the University of Bath for over 15 years.
www.markwray.co.uk

17. 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/

In October 2024, Somerset Council adopted ten placemaking principles. These principles are a material consideration for the preparation of masterplans, pre-application advice, assessing planning applications and any other development management purposes.

[somersetcc.sharepoint.com/:b:/s/SCCPublic/
EeiHsFsaaKRlpXsb3VZ0cxIB_7NCNjgAWiRVGikTqTT7yQ?e=bMDont](https://somersetcc.sharepoint.com/:b:/s/SCCPublic/EeiHsFsaaKRlpXsb3VZ0cxIB_7NCNjgAWiRVGikTqTT7yQ?e=bMDont)

Principles of design review

Design Review: Principles and Practice, Design Council

[www.designcouncil.org.uk/fileadmin/uploads/dc/Documents/
Design%2520Review_Principles%2520and%2520Practice_May2019.pdf](http://www.designcouncil.org.uk/fileadmin/uploads/dc/Documents/Design%2520Review_Principles%2520and%2520Practice_May2019.pdf)



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