



KENSINGTON
AND CHELSEA
QUALITY
REVIEW PANEL
ANNUAL
REPORT

IN PARTNERSHIP WITH

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THE ROYAL BOROUGH OF
KENSINGTON
AND CHELSEA



INTRODUCTION

The Kensington and Chelsea Quality Review Panel was set up in 2020 by Frame Projects on behalf of the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea (RBKC). It is chaired by Catherine Burd and includes 25 professional members, selected through an open recruitment process in collaboration with RBKC officers, and two local resident experts.

Terms of reference, available on the planning authority's website, set out the role and remit of the panel, and the way in which it supports the planning process. Schemes requiring design advice are identified by planning officers and referred to the panel for 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 to advise the planning committee on submitted schemes.

The Kensington and Chelsea Quality Review Panel has advised on 14 schemes in the year from April 2020 to April 2021. 4 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, before planning submission.

Frame Projects has developed a process for monitoring and evaluating the impact of quality review panels. This process allows us to obtain insight into the effectiveness and performance of each of our panels, as well as valuable information on the significant emerging issues from panel reviews. It also provides public transparency and allows for continual improvement of our services. This process includes collecting quantitative information based on the reviews carried out from April 2020 to March 2021. It also includes feedback from panel members, applicants and local planning 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 between 1 April 2020 to 31 March 2021.

Due to government restrictions relating to Covid-19, all review meetings managed by Frame Projects were conducted online via video conference from 16 March 2020.

PANEL

Authority

Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea

Review Panel name

Kensington and Chelsea Quality Review Panel

Panel management

Externally managed, Frame Projects

Contact name for panel

Cindy Reriti, Frame Projects

Contact email address

Cindy@frame-projects.co.uk

Report produced by

Penny Nakan, Frame Projects



REVIEW TOTALS

Total number of reviews

18

Number of formal reviews
(5 panel members)

15

Number of site visits (in person)

0

Number of follow up /
second reviews

4

Chair's reviews
(1-2 panel members)

3

Number of site visits (virtual)

15

PANEL COMPOSITION

PANEL MEMBERS USED THIS YEAR

No. of different panel members used

21

Male panel members

52%

Female panel members

48%

BAME panel members
(based on 22 diversity forms)

19%

PANEL EXPERTISE USED

Architecture -
housing design

7

Architecture -
public / cultural

2

Heritage / townscape

17

Inclusive design

2

Urban design / planning

2

Architecture -
mixed use

5

Landscape / public
realm

7

Local resident expert

3

Sustainable design

5

Transport planning

1

PROPOSALS REVIEWED

APPLICANT TYPE

Private developer

12

Local authority

6

Public private partnership

0

STAGE OF PROPOSAL

Pre-application

17

(plus Kensal Canalside
Opportunity Area SPD)

Planning application
submitted

0

Amendment to
approved application

0

TYPE OF PROPOSAL

Masterplan

2

Mixed use

4

Policy or strategic document

1

Commercial

2

Residential (1-50 units)

1

Residential (50+ units)


6

Cultural

2

Other

0



Frame Projects has worked with the local planning authority to identify schemes to assess as part of the monitoring and evaluation process. These consist of schemes that have been reviewed by the Quality Review Panel, and where a planning decision has been determined between 1 April 2020 to 31 March 2021.

The schemes used for feedback in this evaluation are:

- King's Walk, 118 – 122 King's Road PP/20/04157
- Natural History Museum PP/20/04035
- Kensal Canalside Opportunity Area SPD not applicable

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

APPLICANT QUESTIONNAIRE

6 applicants were contacted twice to complete the feedback questionnaire. 2 out of 6 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

All applicant respondents agreed that they were clear about the information that they needed to provide prior to the review. Half of those who responded considered that the review sessions were conducted in a constructive manner and that the panel reports accurately captured review discussions. While one applicant felt that the panel offered good, reasonable and constructive comments which helped to improve the final scheme, another applicant stressed the importance of ensuring that panel members understand the context of the proposal and take into consideration the council's briefing when offering feedback.

LOCAL AUTHORITY QUESTIONNAIRE

6 local planning authority representatives were contacted twice to complete the feedback questionnaire. 2 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

All Local Authority officers who responded to the questionnaire felt that they were clear about their role in the review process. Some officers found the panel's comments during the review clear and constructive, the report helpful in supporting negotiations on design quality, and that the planning committee gave weight to the design review advice in the decision making process. Others felt that the panel needed to better understand the Council's priorities.

PANEL QUESTIONNAIRE

10 panel members were contacted twice to complete the feedback questionnaire. 9 out of 10 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

Although physical site visits have not been possible due to government restrictions, the majority of the panel considered that, even when virtual, they are an important part of the review process. Most respondents agreed that the reports accurately captured review discussions, and that the level of information provided prior to the review was sufficient.

One panel member felt that on one occasion both the applicant and the planning officers presented design detail when fundamental issues had not been fully resolved. Another panel member highlighted the difficulty of fully grasping technical information without having seen it prior to the presentation.

EMERGING ISSUES AND NEXT STEPS

One panel member highlighted the value of a return to physical site visits as soon as it is possible. Frame Projects also values the importance of site visits and will continue to liaise with RBKC to establish a return to both physical site visits and face to face review meetings.

Frame Projects works to continually improve the review process. In response to the Climate Emergency, it worked in collaboration with Architects Declare and London Energy Transformation Initiative (LETI) to run a training session for RBKC officers and panel members in Spring 2021. Frame Projects will strengthen the approach to sustainability and low carbon design by using the output from this session to form the basis for information requested from applicants to be provided for panel members in advance of review meetings.

Kensington and Chelsea have highlighted the need for the panel to become more aligned with their priorities. Frame Projects continues to work with the Council – at both planning officer and management level – to continually improve the review process. It acknowledges the pressure that all local authorities are under to increase housing numbers.

