



BRENT QUALITY
REVIEW PANEL

1 JULY 2023 -
30 JUNE 2024

ANNUAL
REPORT

IN PARTNERSHIP WITH

Frame Projects
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INTRODUCTION

The Brent Quality Review Panel was set up in 2022 by Frame Projects on behalf of Brent Council. It is co-chaired by Kaye Stout, partner of Pollard Thomas Edwards, and Tom Greenall, director of DSDHA. The panel includes 24 professional members, selected through an open recruitment process in collaboration with Brent officers.

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 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 Brent Quality Review Panel has advised on 15 schemes in the year from July 2023 to June 2024. Eight of the reviews were returning schemes, which have been reviewed by the panel 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.

Cover image: Seen and Heard Workshop, London Borough of Culture © Brent Council
Image: Brent Quality Review Panel site visit, O'Hara © Frame Projects



PANEL

Authority

Brent Council

Review Panel name

Brent Quality Review Panel

Panel management

Frame Projects

Contact name for panel

Lucy Block, Frame Projects

Contact email address

Lucy@frame-projects.co.uk

Image: Unity Place by Gort Scott © Paul Riddle



REVIEW TOTALS

Number of reviews

15

Number of site visits

7

Number of first reviews

7

Number of follow up reviews

8

Formal reviews
(chair plus four panel members)

6

Workshop reviews
(chair plus two panel members)

4

Chair's reviews
(chair plus one panel member)

5

PANEL COMPOSITION

PANEL MEMBERS USED THIS YEAR

No. of different panel members used

51

Male panel members

41%

Female panel members

59%

Diverse ethnic background
(based on diversity forms)

53%

PANEL COMPOSITION

Architecture

13

Urban design / town planning

7

Landscape / public realm

10

Transport planning

1

Health / wellbeing

4

Sustainability

12

Community engagement

3

Heritage / conservation

1

PROPOSALS REVIEWED

APPLICANT TYPE

Private developer

12

Local authority

3

Public private partnership

0

STAGE OF PROPOSAL

Pre-application

15

Planning application
submitted

0

Amendment to approved
application

0

TYPE OF PROPOSAL

Masterplan

2

Mixed use

5

Residential (1-50 units)

1

Residential (50+ units)

3

Student housing

1

Commercial

3

EMERGING THEMES AND ISSUES

Since the Brent Quality Review Panel was setup, the Council has found the process highly valuable. While independent, it is reassuring that feedback from the panel consistently highlights and amplifies the Council's concerns, supporting Brent's vision for creating high-quality places and communities.

A few emerging themes and issues have been identified and summarised below.

Variety of schemes

The panel has seen a good variety of schemes over the reporting period. While a significant number of the major opportunity and growth areas have come for review, there are still some larger sites in the pipeline, as well as opportunities to review reserved matter applications.

The Council is working to encourage smaller schemes to participate in the Quality Review Panel process, especially infill sites and developments in challenging contexts. There is clear evidence to show that these schemes can benefit greatly from the design review process. The cumulative impact of smaller schemes on the quality of an area can be significant. There is also value to the applicant in securing independent design advice, to help find solutions to any concerns raised by local residents for infill sites.

The Quality Review Panel could play a role in helping Brent Council to raise the bar for the quality of these smaller schemes, where there is a risk applicants see lower quality as acceptable in an outer London location. The panel can assist the Council in upholding its aspiration for quality across the whole of the Borough.

Panel expertise

The Brent Quality Review Panel is one of the most diverse panels that Frame Projects manages. While the panel benefits from a broad range of expertise, it was agreed to bolster the panel membership further to recognise the Council's aspirations and support officers within the team. A new ecologist, as well as an additional sustainability and health/wellbeing experts have recently joined the panel.

FORWARD LOOK

It would be useful to consider how to give more regular feedback and updates to panel members following their input into the pre-application process. While this could be on an informal basis, there could also be scope for the panel to be involved post planning, for instance, involvement with discharge of conditions or similar. There is also precedent on other panels for reviews to take place post-submission, to review amendments to the schemes which may be developed through the determination period.

There have been a number of policy updates and design guidance documents adopted since the panel was set up. It would be useful to brief the panel on these updates, to inform its advice and feedback going forward. Review briefings and agendas could also refer to these documents as part of the planning context, to help maximise the value and relevance of the panel's advice.

An Annual Meeting will be arranged in the autumn of 2024, and will be attended by the co-chairs, panel members, Brent officers and Frame Projects. This will provide an opportunity to share lessons learned and reflect on case studies where the panel's advice has had an impact on the quality of the design and pre-application discussions. This could also include a tour of growth areas or sites that are in the pipeline for future reviews.

Image: Brent Civic Centre © Brent Council

