

London Borough of Haringey Quality Review Panel

Report on work of the Quality Review Panel since January 2018

21 January 2019

1. Introduction

The Haringey Quality Review Panel was set up in 2015 by Frame Projects on behalf of the London Borough of Haringey. It is chaired by Peter Studdert, with Hari Phillips as vice-chair; and includes a further 26 professional experts, selected through an open recruitment process in collaboration with Haringey officers.

The Terms of Reference, available via the Council's web site, sets 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 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.

Over the four and a half years in which the panel has been in operation, it has become increasingly well integrated with Haringey's planning process. The number of schemes being referred to the panel has increased, and there is evidence of it supporting high quality design in the borough, as set out below.

2. Schemes reviewed since January 2018

Number of schemes

Since January 2018, the Haringey Quality Review Panel has advised on 26 development proposals. A number of these have been large masterplan projects comprising multiple smaller sites; so, in reality the number of actual schemes reviewed has been greater than this. Many of the development proposals have also 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, 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.

Types of schemes reviewed

The panel offers three review formats, to make it accessible to a wide range of development proposals.

Formal reviews are provided for major planning applications, with five panel members to provide a wide range of professional expertise. Examples of formal reviews include: the Iceland site, Brook Road; the Argent SDP masterplan; and 300-306 West Green Road.

Chair's reviews can be appropriate for smaller development proposals or returning schemes, where meeting with the chair plus one panel member is sufficient. An example is Newstead, Denewood Road, a scheme proposing demolition and redevelopment of a former single-storey nursing home, to deliver new residential accommodation within the Highgate Conservation Area.

Surgery reviews are also offered, with a chair plus one panel member, at shorter meetings with a brief summary report. This allows the panel to advise on very small schemes, such as single houses in sensitive contexts, or discharge of planning conditions. An example is the National College for Digital Skills, a landmark scheme in Tottenham Hale, where a surgery review was scheduled to evaluate potential amendments to the scheme subsequent to detailed planning consent.

Increase in schemes reviewed

Overall, the number of schemes being referred to the panel for review has increased steadily, with a total of:

- 25 reviews in 2015 (April to December)
- 37 reviews in 2016
- 49 reviews in 2017
- 43 reviews in 2018

The total number of reviews scheduled in 2018 (43), included 20 formal reviews, 22 chair's reviews, and 1 surgery review.

The increase (from 2015/2016) in total number of reviews scheduled each year reflects the confidence of planning officers in the ability of the panel to support their casework design negotiations. It also demonstrates recognition by the development industry that the panel's advice carries weight in Haringey's planning process.



3. Emerging issues

Through its role advising on a wide range of development proposals in Haringey, the panel has begun to identify some emerging issues.

Haringey's in-house design skills

In general, the panel has been impressed by the level of design thinking and discussions that have evidently taken place before schemes are referred to it. There have been very few cases in which the panel has recommended that a fundamental rethink is required – which is evidence of planning officers' skill in early pre-application negotiation – and that high standards of design are the expected norm.

Large-scale masterplans

Some very large-scale developments, such as the Ashley Road South Masterplan Area and the Argent SDP Masterplan Area, have proved challenging for the panel to assess – because of the sheer volume of detailed design information. Very large development proposals can be difficult to scrutinise adequately when multiple sites are submitted for detailed planning approval at the same time. The panel feels that early engagement with the Quality Review Panel can help to overcome some of these issues, as found within both the Ashley Road South Masterplan Area and the Argent SDP Masterplan Area. A series of reviews were scheduled for both projects during the pre-application phase, allowing individual sites to be reviewed in tandem with the overall masterplan.

Quality of life issues

The panel has also been asked to comment on several schemes where it questioned the quality of life that would be created for residents. In these cases the panel's comments have focused on ensuring that proposals strike a good balance between optimising the amount of residential or employment accommodation delivered on site at the same time as creating high quality places to live, work and visit. At the first review of 423 West Green Road in May 2017, the panel felt that residential layout created awkward and compromised flat plans. At the subsequent review in March 2018, the panel felt the quality of residential accommodation was much improved. Similar concerns about quality of life (or 'liveability') were raised about proposed residential accommodation at 1-6 Crescent Mews. These examples illustrate the panel's interest in making sure Haringey is a great place to live – as well as championing its townscape and architectural quality.

Impact of reviews

The Haringey Quality Review Panel has now been in operation for over four years, and during this time it has helped support significant improvements in the quality of development in the borough. Some recent examples of this are provided below.



4. Successes

Argent SDP Masterplan Area – Tottenham Hale

The proposals for the Argent SDP Masterplan Area were first reviewed by the panel in November 2017. It supported the emerging aspirations for the project, but encouraged further exploration of massing options for Ferry Island and the design of public spaces. Further reviews of the individual sites and the evolving public realm strategy followed in 2018 (February, March, April and September), which enabled the panel's feedback to help shape the relocation of the tower element at Ferry Island, the creation of an arcade providing a legible route to the station, and a series of interconnected spaces, each with a different dynamic and approach. The panel welcomed improvements to the quality and liveability of the residential accommodation. At a final review in November 2018 the panel gave its warm support to the development proposals. It feels that the scheme will dramatically transform the nature of Tottenham Hale, both as a destination and as a place to live and enjoy. The scheme was approved in December 2018.

Ashley House and Cannon Futon Factory, Ashley Road

Part of the larger Ashley Road South Masterplan Area, Ashley House and Cannon Factory received outline planning permission in July 2017. During the reserved matters pre-application process, the panel reviewed the proposals two further times, as the scheme was undergoing a process of rationalisation. At the first reserved matters review the panel felt that the pavilion building (Building 2) had lost some of its defining dynamism and fluidity; it also felt that the visual configuration and silhouette of Building 3 required further thought, and that a greater coherence was needed between Building 2a, and its immediate neighbour, Building 1a. At the second review, the panel felt that the proposals had responded well to their previous feedback, and were now broadly successful. In particular they welcomed the approach to the pavilion, and felt that the design team had struck a positive balance between dynamism and buildability. The panel were able to offer their support for the reserved matters application, subject to some further detailed design resolution.

Ashley Park, Ashley Road

At the initial review of Ashley Park in September 2018, the panel raised concerns about the quality of the residential units, including issues of daylight and sunlight, and amenity space. Following the initial review, the layout of the scheme was improved, by re-locating access decks from the south to the north of the building, allowing balconies and living spaces to enjoy south facing views. The relocation of a ground floor entrance allowed the provision of larger duplex units with private amenity space. At the second review in December 2018, the panel were also impressed by the flexible approach to landscaping of the central courtyard, allowing additional demountable landscape elements to be located on unused parking spaces.



5. Next steps

As the Haringey Quality Review Panel enters its fifth year, the role of the panel seems very well-established, and the working relationships with both Council officers and applicants and design teams continues to strengthen.

Construction is due to commence (or has already begun) on a number of major schemes that have been through the review process in 2018. As key parts of the borough begin to transform, this will offer an opportunity to see at first-hand how the Council's commitment to achieving high quality design – alongside the work of the panel - is shaping these new places to live, work and visit.

