

# **LEWISHAM DESIGN REVIEW PANEL**

## **Methods Of Operation**

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### **Panel Meetings**

In general, the Panel will meet every four weeks. Ideally meetings will be held on the same day of the week, but this should be confirmed in advance from the diary of Panel meetings. Depending on a volume of proposals to be reviewed, during certain periods the Panel may need to meet more frequently.

Each Panel meeting will consist of a half day session. It is envisaged the Panel will consist of 5 to 6 representatives from a range of built environment design professionals in architecture, planning, urban design, the arts, landscape design, environmental sustainability, engineering and other relevant disciplines. Panel members with architectural background would account for approximately half of all Panel members in each meeting. It is a responsibility of urban design officers to ensure a good mix of professionals in each Panel meeting.

In the case of second reviews, all Panel members that saw the proposal the first time will be invited to the review. In order to achieve quorum, the review needs to be attended by at least the chair and two other Panel members.

At each meeting the Panel will review 2 to 3 development proposals nominated by design, development management or regeneration officers. The proposals may be in the form of either statutory planning applications or (preferably) pre-application schemes. It will be the responsibility of the developer or architect of a proposal to provide pre-meeting information to the Panel members a week prior to the meeting. Design officers will provide guidance to the applicant team on the format of the required information. Prior to the meeting, design officers will also distribute to Panel members a briefing from the planning case officer that will summarise any background planning or regeneration information.

### **Site Visits**

In most cases, prior to considering each proposal the design officers will arrange a site visit. The Panel chair and all Panel members in attendance at a particular meeting will need to attend, as will the case officer of the proposal. In the case of some smaller proposals, a site visit may not occur prior to the review, however this will only be exceptional circumstances. If no site visit occurs, proper site contextual information will need to be included in the briefing information.

In general, site visits will not be required for second reviews, unless major contextual or other changes have occurred since the last review.

### **Conduct of Panel Meetings**

Meetings will be chaired by the Design Review Panel Chair, or Deputy Chair, appointed by Lewisham in consultation with appropriate stakeholders. Since it is intended that most proposals will be reviewed at pre-application stage, the meetings will not be open to the public.

Each development proposal should be presented by a representative of the developer, or the client body, normally this will be the architect. The proponents of each development scheme considered will be invited to submit illustrative material which will be displayed at the Panel meeting to allow Panel members to familiarise themselves with the schemes under consideration.

In general, a Panel review will last approximately one hour. For larger schemes, the review time may be lengthened in order to allow enough time to properly present and assess the proposal. For normal reviews, the presentation of the proposal to the Panel should be approximately 15-20 minutes and should include illustrative material, which must be sufficiently clear and visible to enable the Panel to understand the proposal properly and in the necessary level of detail. It is strongly recommended that a model of a proposal and its context is provided. Following the presentation, Panel members will have the rest of the hour discuss the proposal and ask questions to clarify any issues. The scheme presenter(s) will then withdraw and the Panel will continue to discuss and analyse the proposal for up to 15 minutes.

Panel members who are, or have been, personally or professionally involved with a particular proposal under discussion, or who may otherwise be considered to have a conflict of interest, are requested to notify design officers in writing in advance of that particular development being reviewed. The composition of Panel meetings will then be arranged to avoid any conflict. Where a conflict of interests arises at the Panel meeting, any Panel members who have declared a prejudicial interest in a particular item will leave the meeting when it is being considered, and will not take part in the Panel's discussions on the proposal concerned. The Panel's conflict of interest briefing is attached in **Appendix A**.

In order to ensure a professional and reliable forum for discussion at meetings, it is important that appropriate levels of confidentiality are maintained, particularly when proposals are at preapplication stage. Therefore, Panel members will be expected to adhere to the Panel's protocol on confidentiality. The Panel's confidentiality briefing can be found in **Appendix B**.

### **Information provided to the Panel**

For each proposal considered by the Panel the project team should provide a brief design statement setting out:

- The purpose of the proposal
- An urban design analysis of the site and its context, to include any significant masterplans or other area initiatives that affect the proposal
- The principles underlying the architectural design
- An outline of the design process, to include other design options that were pursued
- The broad details of the development form: layout (urban structure and urban grain), landscape, density and mix, scale (height and massing) and appearance (materials and an indication of key details)
- The implications of the development for urban and environmental sustainability
- The programme of the development
- If a second review, a statement on how the Panel's previous comments have been addressed.

The above list should be used as a guidance for the representatives of the developer team when structuring its presentation to the Panel (described under Panel Meetings section).

In addition, the relevant planning case officer should be present to provide a statement of how well the proposal satisfies the relevant planning and regeneration policy context.

### **Feedback from Panel Meetings**

Following the Panel meeting within ten working days, the Design officers will distribute a concise written Design Review Panel Report. The report will be written by the Panel's Chairperson, with input from all Panel members present, and will summarise the Panel's comments on the scheme. The report will be distributed to the project team, as well as the planning case officer, and any other public body stakeholders that are involved in the proposal.

The aim of the Design Review Report is to assist and encourage the potential developer or applicant to achieve and maintain high quality design when the proposal is built. In addition, the contents of the most recent Design Review Report for a scheme will be conveyed to the Planning Committee through the planning case officer's report on the proposal.

### **Monitoring and Evaluation**

The Panel's work will be monitored and evaluated on a regular basis. The evaluation will consider whether or not the advice of the Panel has been taken and if the scheme was better as a result. In particular, it is likely to include assessment of operational effectiveness of the Panel, assessment of whether its advice enabled planning officers to better negotiate design issues with developers and how is its advice perceived by elected Members. Design officers will consider methods for capturing and disseminating lessons learnt from the design review Panel.

### **Contact between Panel Members and Developers**

In order not to prejudice the probity and independence of the Panel and its members, outside of DRP meetings there should be no contact between developers or their agents and Panel members with regard to their development. Any communications should be through Lewisham Planning Service.

## **Appendix A**

### **LEWISHAM DESIGN REVIEW PANEL**

#### **Conflicts of Interests – Briefing for Panel Members**

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Lewisham's Design Review Panel provides a constructive preapplication forum for developers and their design teams seeking design guidance at an early stage of development proposals. In order to ensure the Panel's independence and professionalism, it is essential that Panel members avoid any conflicts of interest that might arise in relation to schemes that come before them during the reviews. The following policies and procedures apply:

1. Conflicts of interests by Panel members should be formally recorded - ideally in advance of each meeting.
2. Panel members are notified of the schemes coming before the Panel at least a week prior. It is expected that at this time, Panel members should declare any possible interest in a project to the Design officer coordinating the meeting.
3. Design officers, in collaboration with the Panel Chair and other Lewisham officers, will determine if the conflict of interest is of a prejudicial nature.
4. A Panel member has a prejudicial interest in a proposal if he or she has:
  - a financial, commercial or professional interest in a project, its client and / or its site;
  - a personal relationship with either the site or an individual or group involved in the project, where that relationship prevents the Panel member from being objective.
5. If it is deemed that a conflict of interest is of a prejudicial nature, the Panel member should not participate in reviews for the proposal. He or she should also not take part in private discussions of the project and should not be in the room during the discussion of the project.
6. If it is deemed that a conflict of interest is of a non-prejudicial nature, the Panel member may be allowed to participate in the review. 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 final report.
7. If a Panel member reviews a scheme, he or she should not comment on the proposal in any other formal capacity, for example through a public consultation exercise.
8. If a member is approached to become involved in sites that have been presented to the Panel which they sat on, they should not do so for a period of at least one year after the Council has determined the scheme.

## **Appendix B**

### **LEWISHAM DESIGN REVIEW PANEL**

#### **Confidentiality Requirements – Briefing for Panel Members**

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Lewisham's Design Review Panel provides a constructive and reliable forum for developers and their design teams to seek guidance at an early stage, where the Panel's advice can have the most impact. It is therefore imperative that appropriate levels of confidentiality are maintained. The following procedures apply:

1. Panel meetings are only to be attended by the Panel members, Lewisham officers, and officers from statutory bodies involved in the project e.g. Greater London Authority, as well as the developer and their design team. If any additional individual is to be in attendance, it should be approved by the Panel Chair and Design officers.
2. Panel members shall keep confidential all information provided to them as part 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 6 and 7).
3. The Panel's advice is provided in the form of a report written by the Panel chair, containing key points arrived at in discussion by the Panel. If any developer, architect, or agent approaches a Panel member for advice on a scheme subject to review (before, during or after), then they should decline to comment and refer the inquiry to Lewisham Design officers. This should not limit Panel members from professionally working on projects within the borough. However if such a scheme comes up for review, that Panel member should not be involved and must declare a conflict of interest.
4. Following the meeting, the Panel chair writes a draft report, circulates it to the Panel members in attendance for comments and then makes any amendments. The chair then forwards the report to Lewisham design officers, who distribute it to all relevant stakeholders. Until that time, the report is confidential.
5. If the proposal is at the pre-application stage, then the report is not made public and is only shared with Lewisham, the developer and design team, and any other statutory bodies involved in the project.
6. If the proposal is reviewed at the application stage or once a reviewed scheme is submitted as a planning application, the report becomes a public document and is kept within the proposal's case file. However, only the final report is made public. Any other information from the Panel meeting that is not expressed in this report remains confidential.

7. If a Panel member wishes to share a final report with a third party, they must seek approval from Lewisham Design officers, who will confirm whether or not the report is public.