



ESSEX QUALITY REVIEW PANEL

ESSEX PLANNING OFFICERS ASSOCIATION



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MEMBERS' GUIDE

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86 - 92 (evens)
William Hunter Way
↗

MONTBAZON PLACE
FLATS 86-92
WILLIAM HUNTER WAY
BRENTWOOD
CM14 4EN



EQRP site visit to William Hunter Way, Brentwood

1.0 Introduction

Introduction to the Essex Quality Review Panel

The Essex Planning Officers Association in partnership with Place Services has established the Essex Quality Review Panel (EQRP).

Essex is one of the UKs fastest growing regions through its close links to London as well as its well-defined infrastructure and economy, the built environment is developing fast and the requirement for high quality design has never been as important.

The EQRP will ensure delivery and promotion of high-quality new developments through the creation of good design, sustainability, and improved quality, creating better places and environments to work and live in the County.

A Quality Review Panel provides a well-established method of offering independent and impartial guidance on the design of new buildings, landscapes, and public space.



The Echoes, Grays - image courtesy of Kilian O'Sullivan

The Purpose of this Document

This document is aimed at the EQRPs current pool of members, as well as potential future members whom may be interested in joining the panel. It explains how the EQRPs process works and incorporates information on how members may get the most value from the quality review process.

Quality Review Panels are a well-established way of improving the quality of design outcomes in the built environment, and it is now recognised in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), as quoted below:

“133. Local planning authorities should ensure that they have access to, and make appropriate use of, tools and processes for assessing and improving the design of development. These include workshops to engage the local community, design advice and review arrangements, and assessment frameworks such as Building for a Healthy Life⁵¹. 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. In assessing applications, local planning authorities should have regard to the outcome from these processes, including any recommendations made by design review panels.”



St Chads, Tilbury - image courtesy of Kilian O'Sullivan

Our Principles & USP

The Panels objective is to encourage high quality design, sustainability, environmental infrastructure and community coherence within Essex.

Each panel will be individually tailored to suit the projects aims and outcomes where panel members will be called upon to reflect the need and requirement of an application. The EQRP does this by not only striving to improve the quality of architecture, urban design, landscape and highway design, but also considering the wider aspects of what makes a fully cohesive community. Other elements such as heritage, health and wellbeing, sustainable energy, and public art are all incorporated. This is what separates the EQRP from more traditional Design Review Panel formats.

The panel will be available to all who would wish to use it, and is expected to be of particular aid where quality and design is at the forefront of discussions at pre-app stage or earlier.

All feedback provided by the Panel will be made in accordance with the set review principles stated within this section of the document.

For the EQRP to succeed, it must be carried out using a robust, yet transparent and collaborative process. It must also offer consistently high standards in the quality of its advice. These standards can be summarised in the key eleven principles.



Beaulieu, Chelmsford - image courtesy of Tate Hindle

Quality Review Principles:

1

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.

2

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.

3

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.

4

Accountable- the Quality 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.

5

Impartial - the advice is informed by independent experts, people who are unconnected with the scheme’s promoters and decision makers, and it ensures that any potential conflicts of interest are managed in an open and transparent way.

6

Transparent – the panel’s remit, membership, governance processes and funding should always be in the public domain.

7

Proportionate – it is used on projects whose significance, at either a local or national level, warrants the investment needed to provide the service.

8

Timely - the advice is conveyed 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.

9

Advisory - the Quality Review Panel does not make decisions, but it offers impartial advice for the people who do.

10

Objective – it appraises schemes according to reasoned, objective criteria rather than the stylistic tastes of individual panel members.

11

Accessible – its findings and advice are clearly expressed in terms that design teams, decision makers and clients can all understand and use.



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The Team

Place Services have created, manage and deliver the services offered through this panel.

Place Services are a leading public sector provider of integrated environmental assessment, planning, design and management services. Their combination of specialist skills and experience means that they are uniquely qualified to help public organisations meet the requirements of the planning process, create practical design solutions and deliver environmental stewardship.

The panel is managed by Jason Yates and Katie Fowler, with Adam Fall and Laura Cohen acting as the Panel Coordinators. Their experience and skills demonstrate the drive for high quality design throughout Essex and the UK.

Contact Us

We're always interested to hear from you regarding the EQR, regardless if you want to provide us some feedback, become a panel member or just interested in finding out more surrounding the Panel, you can contact us in the following ways:

Essex Design Guide

Email: essexdesignguide@essex.gov.uk

Telephone: 0333 013 6840

Website: www.essexdesignguide.co.uk/qualitypanel



Panel Manager - Jason Yates

Email: jason.yates@essex.gov.uk

Telephone: 0333 013 7271

Mobile: 07740901097

Jason's current role involves serving as the Panel Manager of the EQR, working with multiple local authorities across the county to deliver a bespoke quality review service.



Panel Manager - Katie Fowler

Email: katie.fowler@essex.gov.uk

Telephone: 0333 013 6922

Mobile: N/A

Katie's current role involves serving as the Panel Manager of the EQR, working with multiple local authorities across the county to deliver a bespoke quality review service.



Panel Coordinator - Adam Fall

Email: adam.fall@essex.gov.uk

Telephone: 0333 032 2827

Mobile: 07872869355

Adam serves as the Panel Coordinator for the EQRP working alongside the Panel Manager, maintaining the services of the EQRP on a day-to-day basis.



Panel Coordinator - Laura Cohen

Email: laura.cohen@essex.gov.uk

Telephone: N/A

Mobile: N/A

Laura serves as the Panel Coordinator for the EQRP working alongside the Panel Manager, maintaining the services of the EQRP on a day-to-day basis.

2.0 What to Expect During a Review

The Essex Quality Review Panel will be based around a structured format where it is felt this provides the most productive and structured outcomes.

The panel will be formed of at least five panel members who would include the Chair, Panel Manager from Place Service who will arrange, record the panel and compile the panel report. It would be recommended that planning officers involved with the application site would attend the panel; these could include the case officer, landscape, urban design, conservation or highways officer. Any external involvement such as Historic England will also be invited to the review. We also encourage elected members to observe quality review panels to gain an understanding of the discussions that input into a panel report.

The panel will be made up of the following:

- Panel Chair
- Four Panel Members
- Panel Management
- Applicant and Team

Additionally:

- Planning Case Officer / Representative from Local Authority
- External Consultants (Historic England, Highways, etc.)
- Council / Ward Member (Observer)

Panels will be offered on either a half day or full day basis. This will depend on the size, complexity, requirements of a site visit and how developed project proposals may be. The panel manager will confirm or recommend the panel format during the request process.

Panels in most cases will require a site visit by the chair and panel members. Again, should this be required, a site meeting will be recommended and scheduled in before a review. Depending on the location, the panel review can be organised locally to a site to ensure a full review is achievable within one panel review.

The need for a site visit will be agreed between the Panel Chair and Panel Manager prior to the meeting date. Those attending site will consist of the Panel Chair, Panel Members, Panel Manager and Local Authority representative (Case Officer). Should other parties wish to attend this will be considered by the Panel Chair on a case by case basis.

Panels will be formally structured to ensure the applicant has sufficient time to present their design and concepts while allowing suitable time to ensure a constructive discussion can be held around the feedback provided.

Disciplines covered across the EQRP Panel Members

The Essex Quality Review Panel is proud of the members it is able to offer across the County. The Panel comprises of a range of professionalisms responding to the coverage the Panel is able to cover. All Panel Members and Chairs have key experience and links to Essex to ensure a panel is constructed to provide high quality advice for applicants and their teams.

We are always looking to recruit panel members as part of the Essex Quality Review Panel. The Panel is open to the following professions:

- Architecture
- Landscape Architecture
- Urban Design
- Ecology
- Heritage and Conservation
- Sustainability
- Health/Wellbeing/Active Design
- Garden Communities
- Public Art
- Digital Technology
- Transport
- Engineering/drainage



3.0 The Quality Review Process

Background Briefing

Prior to the review session, the panel management team will provide the members with any additional background information not included within the agenda, for example; additional contextual information / site photographs, etc. along with the Case Officer's briefing report containing a summary of the local authority's views on the application, as well as any relevant planning background on the site in question.

This period also allows the panel members to establish any key issues that have been identified within the scheme that need to be explored during the formal discussions. If the project is one that has been reviewed previously by the EQR, then members who are not familiar with the project will be made fully aware of any key issues arising from any previous involvement, to ensure consistency of approach within the session and subsequent comments made within the issued report.

Panel Discussion

Following on from the applicant's presentation, there will be an opportunity for the members ask questions and any areas for further clarifications in turn, before proceeding onto the formal panel discussion, led by the Chair. Although the EQR encourages panel members to engage with each other's points in an exploratory manner, it is important that each member expresses his/her views on the project proposals in a very clear and concise manner, in order to aid a succinct written report of the discussions.



EQR site visit to Brentwood High Street

Discussions Summary

Following on from the discussions, the Panel Chair will then have the opportunity to summarise the main issues covered within the session, providing the key headlines for the applicant team to take away from the detailed feedback provided. If any member feels that an important issue was not covered or sufficiently detailed within the summary, the Chair will invite he/she to raise their respective point at this stage. This is important, as the content of the written report to be issued will be strictly based upon the panel's views and opinions expressed within the open discussion, and not any thoughts shared after the conclusion of the session.

Internal Reflection

Once the session has formally concluded, there will be an opportunity for the members and Chair to reflect upon the summary of the discussions, and agree with the panel management team about the tone, emphasis, and content the written report should take.

Preparation and Distribution of the Report

Once a report of the session has been drafted, it will be circulated to all panel members, usually within 1 week after the session, for their comments by a certain date (to be detailed within email). Once comments have been collated and amended within the report, a final draft can be approved and signed off by the Chair before formal issue.



Timetable of Standard EQRP Process

Step 1 - Initial Enquiry and Invitations

Minimum 3 weeks before session

Request of an EQRP, suitable panel members will be identified by the panel management team, with formal email invitations to be sent to those members.

Step 2 - Confirm Review

Target 2 weeks before session

Confirmation of EQRP and date with the LPA, applicant and panel members. Details on room bookings and travel arrangements to be finalised at this stage, if required.

Step 3 - Case Officer and Applicant Submission

Target 5 working days before session

Pre-submission of documents from the LPA (briefing note) and applicant team (presentation material) for the panel's review prior to the formal session.

Step 4 - Day of Review

Essex Quality Review Panel

LPA and applicant team must be prepared with presentation material for the formal EQRP session to be reviewed by the panel members.

Step 5 - Panel Report

Target 15 working days after session

A formal report of the session will be emailed to the panel members for their final review and input of the document's contents, prior to being signed off by the Panel Chair, to be issued to the applicant team via the LPA.

Step 6 - Payment for Participation

Target 15 working days after session

Panel members should receive an email from ECC Marketplace servers, where they will be required to electronically upload their required invoice in order to receive payment for their services to the EQRP.

Payment Details & How Payment is Issued

Payment rates for **Panel Members'** involvements with the EQRP are as follows:

- Online session: £350.00 + VAT
- Half-day session: £450.00 + VAT
- Full-day session: £550.00 + VAT

NB: the fees include travel and any expenses occurred

Payment rates for **Panel Chairs'** involvements with the EQRP are as follows:

- Online session: £400.00 + VAT
- Half-day session: £500.00 + VAT
- Full-day session: £600.00 + VAT

NB: the fees include travel and any expenses occurred

In order for payment to be released we require an invoice to be uploaded online through the ECC Marketplace portal – a step-by-step guidance of this process can be provided upon request from the Panel Manager. Once an invoice has been uploaded, payment can then be released. As a member you would have been issued an email to both sign up as a supplier (including login details) and to provide the required payment details.

Should there be an ongoing issue with regards to payment, we ask that you use the following contact details for our Service Centre to resolve matters; this includes outstanding payments and/or queries regarding this system. Please copy in both the Panel Manager and/or Coordinator for the panel session to ensure this can be tracked.

Email: ap.servicecentre@essex.gov.uk

Telephone: 03330 135862



Noel Farrer presenting at EQRP launch event in June 2019

5.0 FAQ's

What if there is conflict between panel members?

Panel members are asked to reveal any conflicts of interest prior to be allocated a panel review. If conflicts are identified, alternative panel members will be sort.

How can I recommend colleagues/other professionals to join the panel?

We are always open to new individuals joining our ever-growing pool of experienced panel members. If you have a suitable recommendation for a colleague or other professional to become an EQRP member, then please get in contact with the Panel Manager with the relevant contact details provided in this document.

How can I leave the panel?

As above, please get in contact with the Panel Manager if you are thinking of leaving the EQRP as a Panel Member.



EQRP site discussion in West Hordon

6.0 Declarations & Conflict of Interest

Confidentiality

All information submitted to the EQRP will be treated as strictly private and confidential; only being shared with Panel members to be used for its intended purpose.

We do not publish copies of feedback documents and written feedback is only provided to the LPA and applicant teams. If the EQRP's feedback is submitted to the local authority as part of a planning application, the LPA may choose to make the feedback document public in addition to the other planning documents.

If you have a particularly sensitive project and there is need for additional measures to ensure confidentiality, then please discuss this our Panel Manager.

Conflicts and Declaration of Interest

It is important that the panel's independence and professionalism is maintained and respected during the review process. It is essential to avoid any actual or perceived conflicts of interest in relation to any schemes that come before a panel.

All panel members are requested to identify at an early stage any possible conflicts of interests and to ensure suitable action is taken to avoid or resolve these. Information regarding the panel will be circulated in advance of the review to allow panel members to identify and declare any potential conflicts of interests before the process begins.

Where a conflict of interest is raised and declared, it will be asked that the panel member is to step down from a review. Where a declaration of interest may be sufficient it will be requested a panel member are to contact the panel manager to discuss.

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