

LLDC Quality Review Panel Appraisal



LONDON LEGACY
DEVELOPMENT
CORPORATION





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Executive summary

Design review has an important part to play in delivering high-quality development, turning our buildings and spaces into much-loved places. Its importance is established in policy, on a national, regional and local level, but sometimes, without a commitment to a truly collaborative approach, it can be regarded as just another box to tick and an additional cost on the path to planning approval.

The experience of the London Legacy Development Corporation (LLDC) Quality Review Panel shows what can be achieved when design review is done right. The panel was set up following the London 2012 Olympic Games and Paralympic Games, to support the LLDC in delivering high-quality development in and around Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park. It reviewed around 190 schemes between 2012 and 1 December 2024, when the LLDC returned its planning authority functions to the local boroughs of Hackney, Newham, Tower Hamlets and Waltham Forest.

The report celebrates the work of the LLDC Quality Review Panel over its twelve years of operation. It provides valuable insights and draws out lessons for securing high-quality design that may be useful to other places undergoing growth and change.

The report comprises four parts.

- The set-up and evolution of the panel
- Policy and processes
- Case studies
- The impact of the Quality Review Panel

At the centre of the report are five case studies of schemes reviewed by the panel, underpinned by interviews with applicants, design teams, LLDC officers and the Quality Review Panel chair, as well as reports of the review meetings. The case studies show the breadth of the panel's role and the impact that it had in supporting high-quality design. The five case studies span the LLDC area and cover a range of scales and typologies.

- Here East - showcases the legacy of the 2012 Games through the exemplar retrofit of the Games' former press and broadcast centre into a thriving innovation and technology hub.
- Fish Island Village - illustrates the breadth of the panel's work in suggesting and reviewing a design competition brief for the first comprehensive mixed-use redevelopment in the LLDC area that set high standards for design.
- Stratford Waterfront - highlights how the panel encouraged the implementation of a strong outline scheme, with an independently tested design code. This ensured that 700 high-quality homes will be delivered alongside London's new cultural and education quarter, on a prominent site in the centre of Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park.
- Marshgate Lane - demonstrates how, with the guidance of the panel, a design team adapts to constraints; in this instance, how it approached its design for a site where a previous scheme had been refused and an appeal upheld.
- Jubilee House - illustrates how the panel used LLDC's Local Plan Policy BN.5 'Proposals for tall buildings' to secure significant improvements to the public realm, for the benefit of the students who will occupy the building and for the wider local community.

The success of the Quality Review Panel was based on a set of key factors that led to a collaborative process, focussed on supporting high-quality design at every stage.

1. Setting a benchmark for design quality from the outset

In the early days of the planning authority, the panel's independent expert advice was invaluable to LLDC officers. Its role in advising purely on quality was instrumental in helping them to 'hold the line', setting a benchmark for design quality from the outset.

2. A multi-disciplinary panel for a broader perspective

The range of expertise within the panel enabled it to provide comprehensive advice on the schemes it reviewed. This was instrumental in helping design teams to achieve high-quality buildings and spaces, with a sense of place that extended beyond a site's red line boundary.

3. An experienced and diverse panel membership

The diverse panel membership, which combined a range of personal and professional viewpoints, was critical to the panel's success. There was a balance between long-standing panel members' accumulated knowledge alongside the fresh perspectives provided by a regular refresh of the panel membership.

4. Supporting LLDC officers' use of agreements and conditions

LLDC developed an industry leading Architect Retention and Design Monitoring clause in the legal agreement attached to the planning consent. This encouraged applicants to use the initial design team from consent to completion. The panel supported the use of the agreements, to ensure that the aspirations presented by design teams would actually be delivered.

5. Embedding the Quality Review Panel in the planning process

The reciprocity that developed between the Quality Review Panel, LLDC officers and the Planning Decisions Committee helped to embed the panel in the planning process.

6. Effective panel management

Independent panel management by Frame Projects played an important part in the success of the process, safeguarding the impartiality of the panel's advice and operation.

7. Grounded in LLDC policy and design management process

The LLDC's various policies and design management processes supported the work of the panel, particularly its influential approaches to tall buildings, biodiversity and inclusive design. The panel's independent analysis of how these policies were applied in development proposals, contributed to the ongoing evolution of those policies.

8. Design review is a collaborative process

The Quality Review Panel did not operate in isolation. Its success in the planning process was underpinned by LLDC officers and the LLDC Planning Decisions Committee. The case studies show how effective design review is borne out of collaboration. When all parties are aligned to achieve high-quality design, the review process can be an uplifting and positive experience for all involved.

Great design review is based on open and honest dialogue, providing a valuable forum for the testing of design ideas. It offers design teams a critical friend that will simultaneously support and challenge its design. Its independent advice can help move a project forward, bringing a fresh perspective to the design process. It can add value at a range of scales, from strategic design decisions to small shifts that have a huge impact on success of a project.

An aerial photograph of London, showing the London Stadium in the foreground, surrounded by greenery and a river. In the background, the dense urban landscape of central London is visible, including the City of London skyline with numerous skyscrapers.

London Legacy Development Corporation

In 2012, the Mayor of London established the London Legacy Development Corporation (LLDC) as the first Mayoral Development Corporation. Its task was to drive forward the long-term legacy of the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games and create a dynamic new heart for east London at Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park.

In addition to its development and regeneration functions, the LLDC was established as a local planning authority, with a full range of planning powers and responsibilities spanning a significant area of land around, as well as within, Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park.

The LLDC Quality Review Panel was an integral part of its planning process. The reciprocity that developed between the panel and LLDC officers and planning committee members, played an important role in securing high-quality development as a legacy of the 2012 Games.

On 1 December 2024, the LLDC returned its planning authority functions to the four local boroughs, Hackney, Newham, Tower Hamlets and Waltham Forest, who will reintegrate these into their own planning functions.

This document is an appraisal of the LLDC Quality Review Panel and its achievements. It includes key reflections that may have benefit to other local planning authorities, or organisations involved in delivering regeneration.

Aerial view west over London Stadium towards central London © Jason Hawkes

Introduction

Opportunities to create a new quarter of London are rare. The large scale transformation of the area around Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park in east London followed significant public investment during and after the 2012 Games. Achieving long-term public value from this investment demanded the highest quality placemaking. The London Legacy Development Corporation (LLDC) set out its vision for this new district with demanding ambitions for design, sustainability and liveability. Alongside exemplary policy and talented in-house expertise, LLDC decided from the outset to establish an independent Quality Review Panel to ensure that its work met the highest standards.

This report celebrates the work of the LLDC Quality Review Panel in its 12 years of operation following the London 2012 Olympic Games and Paralympic Games. It outlines how the panel was set up and how its membership evolved over time to reflect the diversity of the LLDC area and to strengthen its sustainability expertise in response to the climate emergency. By retaining long-standing panel members while regularly bringing in new expertise, LLDC ensured that there was always a balance of accumulated knowledge, fresh ideas and diverse perspectives available to advise on proposed development.

The work of the panel was underpinned by planning policies and processes, from national to London and local level. LLDC's corporate policies supported the creation of thriving and successful places that are inclusive and sustainable environments. Each of LLDC's priority themes had a set of expected outcomes.

- Delivering high-quality design: creating urban spaces that are attractive, inclusive, and sustainable, setting new standards for design excellence.
- Delivering inclusion and diversity: making every environment accessible and welcoming to all, celebrating diversity in all its forms.
- Delivering inclusive growth and community wellbeing: promoting social, economic, and environmental benefits for all communities, fostering a sense of belonging and shared prosperity.
- Delivering sustainable development and responding to the climate emergency: leading the way in sustainable development by achieving net zero carbon, improving climate resilience, and enhancing biodiversity.

In particular, LLDC's Local Plan Policy BN.5 'Proposals for tall buildings' set a benchmark for exceptionally good design, which went beyond setting high standards for the aesthetics of the building. It stipulated that a range of criteria, including material choices, servicing arrangements, public realm and townscape, that had to be met and demonstrated through independent design review. Similarly, Policy BN.3 'Maximising biodiversity' required biodiversity to be protected and enhanced, and was a precursor to national policies on urban greening factor and biodiversity net gain. Panel members with landscape expertise helped to assess these aspects of proposals.

The report also emphasises the importance of the working relationships that evolved between the panel, LLDC officers and the LLDC Planning Decisions Committee, in securing high-quality development.

Around 190 schemes were reviewed by the Quality Review Panel between 2012 and 2024. The report showcases the breadth of the panel's role and demonstrates the high quality of development that has been delivered, and that will come forward in the future, through the lens of five case studies. In some instances, specific aspects of a scheme have been highlighted, to meet the scope of this report.

The selected case studies span the LLDC area and cover a range of scales and typologies:

- Here East
- Fish Island Village
- Stratford Waterfront
- Marshgate Lane
- Jubilee House

The appraisal has been informed by the reports of review meetings and interviews with the applicants, design teams, LLDC officers and the Quality Review Panel chairs involved with each scheme. It identifies some of the key lessons from the twelve years of the panel's operation, which may be useful to other places undergoing growth and change.

01. Panel set-up and evolution

Legacy Communities Scheme

In June 2012, the Planning Decisions Committee of the Olympic Delivery Authority (ODA) resolved to grant outline planning permission for the Legacy Communities Scheme. This provided a masterplan for 64.4 hectares of land within the Olympic Park, to be known after the 2012 Games as Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park. It envisaged around 6,870 new homes across five new neighbourhoods, two new primary schools, a secondary school, playing fields, nurseries, community space and health centres. It was a condition of this planning consent that a Quality Review Panel should be set up to provide independent advice from a group of respected professionals to the planning authority, which from 1 October 2012 became the London Legacy Development Corporation.

The requirement for the panel was prioritised by the new development corporation, and its role was embedded in the organisation from the outset. Many of the ODA's planning team transferred to the LLDC Planning Policy and Decisions Team, including Vivienne Ramsey as Director of Planning and Anthony Hollingsworth as Head of Development Management. Design leadership for both planning and delivery was the responsibility of Kathryn Firth as Chief of Design, working with Sowmya Parthasarathy as Urban Design Advisor. These were the four members of the newly established LLDC who formed the steering group for work to establish the Quality Review Panel. This collaborative direction of the process by design and planning colleagues continued throughout the life of the panel.

Aerial view of Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park in 2012 © LLDC



Establishing the panel

Ensuring the independence of the Quality Review Panel was important, because the LLDC was both landowner, promoting development, and local planning authority. A competitive tender was run to appoint an external panel manager to safeguard the independence of the panel's advice. The consultancy team successful in this tender process was led by Deborah Denner, who brought substantial experience of design review from her previous role at the Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment (CABE). She went on to become founding Director of Frame Projects, which continued to manage the Quality Review Panel until 1 December 2024, when the LLDC handed its planning powers back to the neighbouring boroughs.

Striking a balance between impartiality and the ability to act as a critical friend was essential to the set-up of the Quality Review Panel. To achieve this, Frame Projects took responsibility for recruitment of panel members, liaising with both the LLDC's Planning Policy and Decisions Team and the Design Team. Selection criteria were agreed, and the opportunity to join the panel was advertised through an open call process. Candidates for the role of chair were shortlisted from among the wider panel applications. Interviews were arranged by Frame Projects, with both Vivienne Ramsey and Kathryn Firth taking part.

Peter Studdert was appointed as chair and played a pivotal role in the success of the new panel. Having been Director of Joint Planning at South Cambridgeshire District Council, he brought a deep understanding of how to negotiate with applicants to secure design quality. He also brought local knowledge of the area, having lived and worked in Tower Hamlets earlier in his career. The panel membership was selected to provide multi-disciplinary design expertise, including architects, access and inclusive design specialists, engineers, landscape architects, sustainability experts and urban designers. A complete list of the panel's membership from 2012 to 2024 is included in Appendix A.

Defining the panel's governance was a collaborative process. Terms of reference were drafted with input from the LLDC's design, planning and legal teams. This provided clarity to panel members on managing conflicts of interest and confidentiality, as well as clearly describing the role and remit of the panel. Biographies of panel members were included to demonstrate the high calibre of professional expertise, and to ensure transparency about those taking part.

Two types of review were agreed. A formal review with a chair and four panel members provided a broad range of professional expertise appropriate to the large-scale projects coming forward in the area. Planning application reviews, attended by the chair plus one or two other panel members, were intended to allow the panel to assess the design response to its previous comments. These smaller format reviews were later renamed chair's reviews, as they proved useful as a lower cost service for smaller projects, where a formal review might seem disproportionate.

Progress meetings between LLDC, Frame Projects and the panel chair were arranged every 6 to 12 months to keep the panel membership and process under review. As development activity in the LLDC area intensified and the panel became busier, its membership expanded. Annual meetings were arranged to provide feedback from the LLDC to panel members on the impact of their advice, and to allow for update briefings on emerging policy and guidance. The chair of the panel was also invited to meet the Planning Decisions Committee once a year. All of this was intended to ensure that the panel was able to operate as an integral part of the LLDC planning process, at the same time as giving independent advice.

Shortly after the 2012 Games, the Quality Review Panel had already started work. The first scheme reviewed by the panel within Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park was Chobham Manor. This was the first of five new residential neighbourhoods on the Park to be brought forward by the LLDC. At the same time, outside the LLDC's ownership in Fish Island, a scheme known as Neptune Wharf had already been submitted for planning approval. This was an outline planning application for a new neighbourhood, including a primary school. The Quality Review Panel's influence on Neptune Wharf (which later became known as Fish Island Village) is described in more detail in the case studies section of this report, and illustrates the role the panel played in establishing a benchmark for design quality. This was its purpose - to ensure high quality development of lasting social value was achieved where land values in and around the Park had been increased by investment of public money during and after the 2012 Games.



Policy and principles of quality review

The LLDC Quality Review Panel was set up at a time when the provision of design review as part of the planning process was in evolution. During the period from 1999 to 2011, CABE provided design review across England, as a non-departmental public body. Following CABE's merger with the Design Council in 2011 the government commissioned 'The Bishop Review: The Future of Design in the Built Environment.'¹ This review ran in parallel with work on the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), published in 2012. For the first time, this national policy referred to design review, stating that 'local planning authorities should have local design review arrangements in place to provide assessment and support to ensure high standards of design.'² This gave design review greater status in the planning process than it had previously, and put the emphasis on local provision, in line with the government's focus on localism.

In this planning policy context, the Olympic Delivery Authority was ahead of the curve, having established its own design review panel run by CABE. Similarly, Newham Council set up its own design review panel in 2007, with a separate, project-specific Stratford City panel also in operation. As such there was an established baseline for design review when the Legacy Communities Scheme outline approval was drafted to include a requirement for the LLDC Quality Review Panel. This was subsequently reinforced by the LLDC Design Quality Policy, which refers to the panel as an integral part of its design governance.³

It was 'Design Review Principles and Practice'⁴ which provided the most widely-accepted best practice guidance. This was produced by the Design Council in partnership with the Landscape Institute, Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA), and Royal Town Planning Institute (RTPI). The LLDC Quality Review Panel was set up in line with the ten principles set out in this document to ensure it was: independent; expert; multi-disciplinary; accountable; transparent; proportionate; timely; advisory; objective; and accessible.

Chobham Manor, Haworth Tompkins © Jack Hobhouse

Terms of reference

Establishing robust terms of reference for the new Quality Review Panel was a key task during the set-up stage. The high-profile nature of development opportunities after the Games underlined the need for the new process to withstand scrutiny. Agreeing terms of reference also provided an opportunity to consult the host Boroughs of Hackney, Newham, Tower Hamlets and Waltham Forest, ensuring their confidence in the new panel, and by extension the LLDC's stewardship of design quality.

In the LLDC context, it was important to clarify the panel's role in advising on schemes where the LLDC was client or landowner, as well as schemes by other developers where it was the planning authority. The terms of reference also clarified that the panel would consider significant development within the Mayoral development area, with significance not necessarily depending on size, but also factors such as the effect on sensitive views, or schemes having a significant impact on quality of everyday life. It is notable that LLDC embraced quality review of projects that affect the lives of thousands of residents on a daily basis, without being large in scale. For example, the Jupp Road Bridge which provides an improved pedestrian and cycle link over the railway lines that separate Carpenters Estate from Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park.

Over the 12 years of the panel's operation, its terms of reference were updated annually, as refinements were made to the panel process, and its membership was regularly refreshed. The most up to date version was made available on both Frame Projects' and the LLDC's websites, and a copy was sent to every applicant team participating in the review process. This provided clarity and transparency around the role, remit, operation and membership of the panel.

Benefits of local quality review

When the LLDC Quality Review Panel was set up in 2012, it was one of the first local panels serving a specific planning authority to be established in London. The Boroughs of Hackney and Newham were forerunners in this regard, having local design review panels since 2006 and 2007 respectively. However, it was not until 2024 that all of the London Boroughs (except the City of London) established their own local panels.

The locally focused nature of the LLDC Quality Review Panel led to some key benefits. The consistency of the people involved in delivering design advice meant that they had a much better understanding of the aims and aspirations of the planning authority. Frame Projects provided a dedicated panel manager to liaise with the LLDC about schemes requiring review, attend all meetings, and write reports capturing the panel discussion. This person was supported by a panel coordinator, similarly dedicated to working with the LLDC, and able to ensure that all the logistics ran smoothly. The appointment of panel members and a chair in partnership with the LLDC, created a group of people who over their term of membership became experts in the development coming forward in the area, its opportunities and challenges.

Site visits were arranged before every review, with both applicant and planning officers attending alongside panel members. Meetings taking place at the LLDC offices made it efficient for case officers and more senior staff to join. Review meetings could be attended in person by anyone who had a role in the project. Junior staff were encouraged to attend to further their learning and development. Frame Projects introduced an opportunity for the planning and design officers responsible for each scheme to brief the panel in advance of the applicant's presentation. This ensured that the panel was fully aware of the planning policy context, progress to date in pre-application discussions, and issues where its advice could help bring the applicant and planning authority into alignment. As chair, Peter Studdert set the tone for the LLDC Quality Review Panel, supporting the LLDC in achieving the best possible outcomes as planning authority.

A service at no cost to the public purse

The LLDC Quality Review Panel was set up on the basis that it should operate at no cost to the public purse – except where the LLDC was the planning applicant. Historically, as a government funded agency, CABE had been able to provide a service that was free at the point of use. With the phased withdrawal of government funding after CABE's amalgamation with the Design Council, a new cost model was required. The LLDC made a small budget available to cover the work required to establish the panel, recruiting its members, and putting in place the processes required for its operation. After the set-up stage, each scheme referred for a review was charged a fee. This covered the cost of panel attendance, and arrangements and report writing by Frame Projects. The charges were benchmarked against comparable design review panels operating in other London Boroughs, and reviewed annually.

Contribution to an iterative design process

The success of the Quality Review Panel as a component of the LLDC's planning service was based on its contribution to iterative design processes. There was clarity from the start about the panel's role in supporting the Planning Policy and Decisions Team in negotiating improvements to design through pre-application conversations. This was equally true whether the LLDC design team was involved on the development management side, for third party proposals, or client side for LLDC led schemes. In the latter case the panel played a more significant role because with LLDC design officers wearing a 'client hat', the planning case officers relied on the panel for development management design input.

The request for a review was always made by the LLDC Planning Policy and Decisions Team, at a stage when there had already been discussions about the emerging design proposals. This formed the basis of briefings by planning and design officers to the panel, so that their comments would be made with a sound understanding of relevant policy and progress to date. Reports of panel discussions were written to support continuing design negotiations. And in many cases schemes were referred back to the panel at the next stage of design resolution. Engagement by senior members of the LLDC team in the panel process was the norm, enabling them to intervene where necessary to resolve design challenges. Overall regular engagement between the LLDC and the Quality Review Panel built confidence and trust that was essential to the impact of its advice.

Wick Lane, dRMM Architects © Will Howard



Diversity of panel membership

When the panel was first established in 2012, the advertisement used to recruit its members focused primarily on 'leading professional experts'. The selection criteria agreed with the LLDC as a basis for selection decisions included a statement that 'the panel should aim to mirror the diversity of the community it serves'. However, the initial cohort of panel members fell well short of reflecting the diversity of the LLDC area. The Greater London Authority set a new benchmark for diversity of design advisory groups in 2017 with the announcement of its first Mayor's Design Advocates. The group addressed under-representation of women and minority groups in the design, architecture and construction industries, with half its members being women, and a quarter being from a diverse background. The LLDC asked Frame Projects to meet these standards as a minimum for subsequent recruitment of Quality Review Panel members. By 2020, with the appointment of new members through an open call process, 53 per cent of the LLDC Quality Review Panel were women and 27 per cent were from a diverse background. When the panel membership was refreshed again in 2022, 32 per cent were from a diverse background.

Frame Projects made several adjustments to the way panel members were recruited as part of its work to improve the diversity of its membership. First, recruitment packs providing full transparency around the selection criteria were produced, together with application forms including a diversity monitoring questionnaire. Second, the wording of the selection criteria was updated to describe a broader ranging definition of design leadership. The 2012 wording 'evidence of leadership, for example principle or director of practice' was changed to acknowledge the valuable contribution that professional experts at an earlier stage in their career might bring to the panel. The new wording 'evidence of leadership e.g. within your organisation / or promoting best practice within your profession' allowed for recognition of thought leadership as well as organisational leadership. The recruitment pack also included a statement of intent that 'participation in a design review panel may be one way in which the next generation of talented designers from diverse backgrounds can build their professional profile and experience. We believe this has potential to make a small but worthwhile contribution to improving the diversity of the built environment professions'.

Sustainability expertise

An ambitious approach to environmental sustainability was fundamental to the work of the LLDC from the outset. The book 'London 2012 Sustainable Design: Delivering a Games Legacy'⁵ records the innovative strategies for environmental sustainability that were developed by the Olympic Delivery Authority. This work was continued by LLDC with 'Your Sustainability Guide to the Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park 2030.'⁶ From its inception the panel included experts in low carbon design and environmental sustainability. However, with the declaration of a climate emergency by the Mayor of London in 2018, there was a need to further strengthen the panel's capacity to advise on this. LLDC also increased requirements for its own developments with the document 'Preparing for a 1.5 Degree Future'⁷ in 2022 and its wider 'Climate Action Strategy'⁸ in 2024, with progress and performance being reported back to the Greater London Authority.

In response, additional sustainability experts were recruited to the panel. Frame Projects also partnered with the Low Energy Transformation Initiative (LETI) to deliver training for all its panel members. This built on publication of the 'LETI Climate Emergency Design Guide'⁹ in January 2020. Online training sessions were organised, with both panel members and LLDC staff invited to attend. LETI professional experts gave a presentation summarising the Climate Emergency Design Guide. This was followed by LETI professionals role playing presentations by applicant teams to help show what panel members should look out for. Attendees were then asked to put their learning into practice through workshop discussions on example schemes. These training sessions were very well attended, and helped to give confidence to panel members in discussing the sustainability aspects of development proposals. Frame Projects also worked with the LETI experts to improve the agenda information gathered from applicant teams in advance of reviews, to provide sufficient detail to enable a more in-depth discussion.

Changes in chair

Peter Studdert chaired the LLDC Quality Review Panel from 2012 to 2021, making an essential contribution to the quality of its advice, based on a deep understanding of the LLDC context. His role involved not just chairing individual review meetings, but also advising on the way in which the panel was run, and maintaining good links with the Planning Decisions Committee through annual feedback sessions. His professional background as a Director of Planning in Cambridge, meant that he was able to steer panel discussions to be a constructive part of the planning process. For example, development in East Village Stratford, the former London 2012 Athlete's Village, was brought forward as part of an existing outline approval for Stratford City granted by Newham Council in 2005. This meant that the LLDC was only able to influence reserved matters for this significant development. A sound understanding of what was already fixed, and where there remained scope for design creativity and improvement, was essential to the effectiveness of the panel's advice on this and many other schemes.

In 2021 Hari Phillips and Peter Bishop were appointed as co-chairs, and Cristina Monteiro as vice-chair through an open call process. This provided a range of professional expertise. Hari Phillips was a founding director of award winning architecture practice Bell Phillips. Peter Bishop brought extensive local government experience of town planning and regeneration, including Director roles at Camden Council and the London Development Agency. Cristina Monteiro is founding director of DK-CM, a practice combining architectural and research work, with a particular focus on community projects. In 2023 there was a further change of chair, with Peter Bishop stepping down, and Teresa Borsuk taking on the co-chair role. As a long standing member of the LLDC panel she also brought experience as Senior Partner of Pollard Thomas Edwards Architects.

Chobham Manor / East Village © Kilian O'Sullivan

LLDC QRP Appraisal





Community review panel

The LLDC continued to innovate throughout its period as a planning authority, and in 2022 tasked Frame Projects with establishing a community review panel on its behalf. A precedent had been set for this by the Old Oak and Park Royal Development Corporation, who established a pioneering community review panel in 2018. Successive revisions to the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) in between 2012 and 2023 put an increasing emphasis on involving local communities in decisions about development in their area. The 2024 NPPF maintains this emphasis, referring to ‘workshops to engage the local community’¹⁰ and recommending that ‘these are used as early as possible in the evolution of schemes’.

The LLDC Community Review Panel provided a means of achieving this aim. It was chaired by David Ubaka, an architect and urban designer, with experience of community engagement. The opportunity for local people to join the panel was advertised as widely as possible through the LLDC’s communication channels, and 18 people were appointed based on application forms and selection workshops. The aim was to match the demographic and geographic range of the LLDC area. Community Review Panel reports have provided insights into the views of local people that have helped inform changes to planning applications and provided local insight as a context for Quality Review Panel reviews. This has helped to ground the comments made in a thorough understanding of local priorities and concerns.

The Quality Review Panel and Community Review Panel formed part of a wider range of independent panels that the LLDC used to review and inform all of the schemes, including: the Built Environment Access Panel; the Sustainable Active Travel Group; Elevate; and the Park Panel.

Panel site visit © Frame Projects

02. Policy and processes

London Plan and Design Review Charter

The role of design review in the planning process stems from the National Planning Policy Framework, December 2024, as described in Section 12 - Achieving well designed places.

“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... there is a range of tools including workshops to engage the local community, design advice and review arrangements... These are of most benefit if used as early as possible in the evolution of schemes... In assessing applications, local planning authorities should have regard to the outcome from these processes, including any recommendations made by design review panels.”¹¹

The London Plan 2021 builds on this in Policy D4 - Delivering good design.

“Boroughs and applicants should make use of the design review process to assess and inform design options early in the planning process. Development proposals referable to the Mayor must have undergone at least one design review early on in their preparation before a planning application is made, or demonstrate that they have undergone a local borough process of scrutiny...”¹²

The GLA has also shown leadership in establishing a benchmark for the delivery of design review, publishing a London Quality Review Charter in 2017, and encouraging all planning authorities in the capital to sign up to it. The Charter provides guidance on best practice by all participants of the design review process, and was updated and renamed as the London Design Review Charter in 2022.¹³

Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park © Alex Savine



The relationship between the Quality Review Panel and LLDC officers

The relationship between LLDC officers and the Quality Review Panel was a reciprocal one that underpinned the panel's successful input into the planning process. The knowledge and skills of LLDC's planning and design officers was very high, with each officer having experience in dealing with complex major applications. Some of the management team had been at the LLDC since its inception in 2012, with many of them transferring from the Olympic Delivery Authority's planning team. The collective knowledge that the team held on the LLDC area, of exemplar schemes and planning precedents, was invaluable.

From 2012, LLDC had adopted a design-led approach to steering policy. This included its first Local Plan, adopted in 2015, and the development of Supplementary Planning Documents, which embedded a site-specific approach to high-quality design. Design officers formed part of the internal design team, led by Peter Maxwell from 2015. The team grew to around 20 people by 2024, and included design managers for LLDC development schemes and experts in landscape, public realm, connectivity and inclusive design. Each officer had a diverse range of skills spanning architecture, urban design, sustainability, landscape, public realm, green infrastructure and biodiversity. Design officers' practical experience in the delivery of buildings and public realm was crucial in guiding schemes through the pre-application process, prior to and after the schemes were reviewed by the Quality Review Panel.

Significant work went into improving schemes from the time they entered the pre-application process. The emphasis was on a masterplan / landscape-led approach, and design teams were encouraged to look beyond the red line boundary of the site.

Schemes were encouraged to go to the Built Environment Access Panel as well as the Quality Review Panel for review. This was also established in 2012, bringing together local members including disabled and non-disabled people, all with experience and knowledge of inclusive design in the built environment.

Design officers provided applicants with a written report after each pre-application meeting and used LLDC policies to underpin design quality as best practice. They also helped to inform the drafting of design conditions, and the discharge of conditions post planning consent. The team was at the forefront of developing architect retention and detailed condition clauses, including requiring the involvement of diverse design teams. This work has been shared more widely via the GLA, with LLDC officers contributing to a guide to architect retention and design monitor roles, to ensure that the design team used at the planning stage is involved in the development from start to finish.

LLDC officers generally referred schemes to the Quality Review Panel at an early stage. This allowed comments to be given before a scheme became too fixed, with the aim of reducing risk of delay at application stage by ensuring that designs reached an acceptable standard. However, officers could also request the review of a scheme once an application had been submitted, if there were issues on which the panel's advice would be valuable, or where they had particular concerns. The panel's advice was used to assist LLDC officers in negotiating design improvements and could be used to support decision making by the Planning Decisions Committee, including refusal of planning permission where design quality was not of a sufficiently high standard.

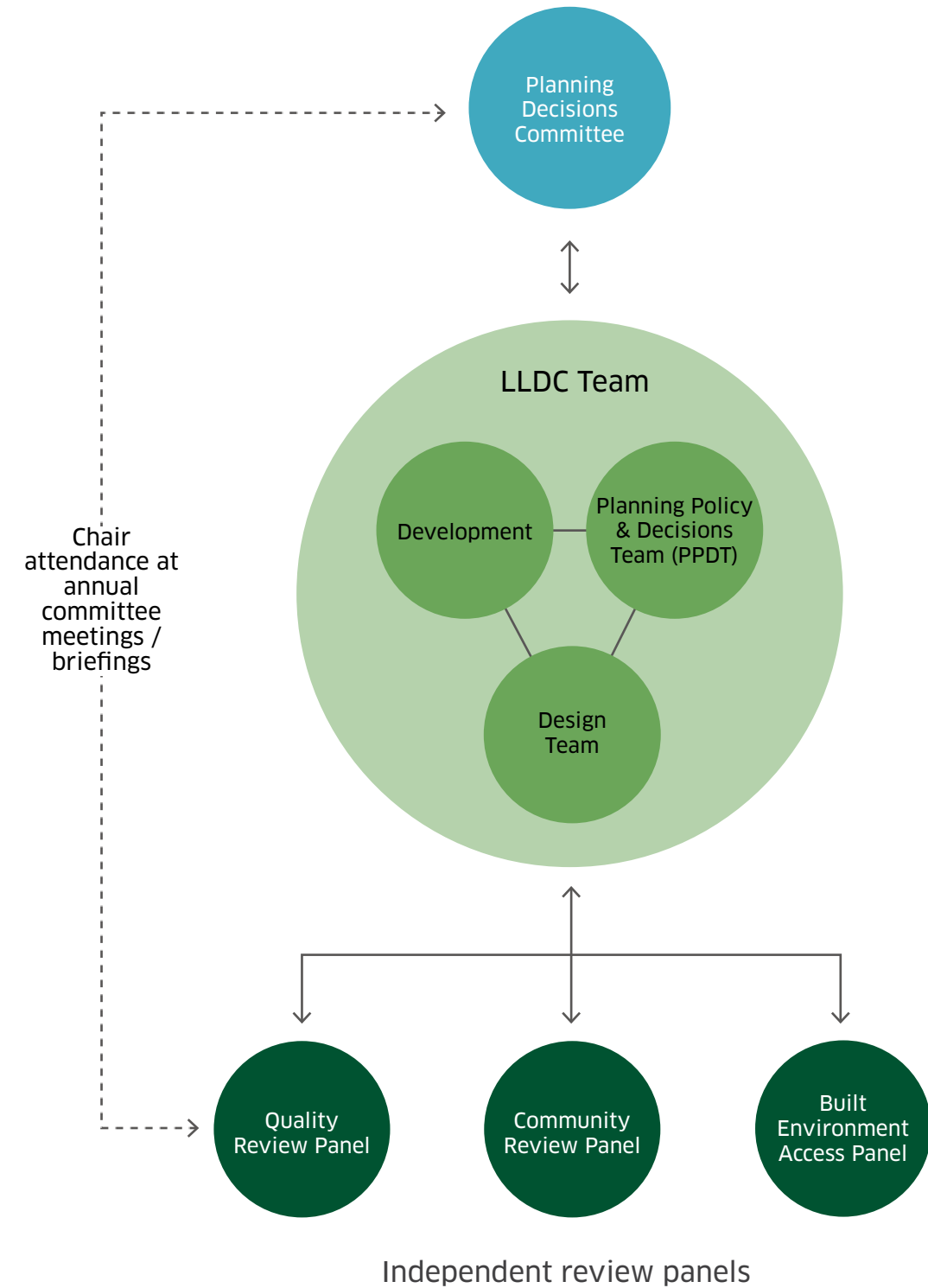


Links with the Planning Committee

Quality Review Panel comments were included in LLDC officer's reports to the Planning Decisions Committee. Panel reports provided independent analysis of design quality to inform the committee's decision making. In particular, any planning application for a tall building, above the prevailing or generally expected height of that area, needed the endorsement of the Quality Review Panel that it met with the relevant policy test of 'exceptionally good design' before it would be reported to the committee. The appointment of a design champion from among the committee membership also helped to keep quality at the top of the agenda in its decision making. The committee as a whole demonstrated a strong commitment to design quality, through its questions to applicants and planning officers about the evolution of the schemes, and the advice of the Quality Review Panel. For example, during a period where a substantial amount of student accommodation and co-living schemes were coming forward in the area, the LLDC Planning Decisions Committee was vocal in pushing for improved space standards, and shared amenity space.

The chair of the Quality Review Panel was invited, on an annual basis, to update the Planning Decisions Committee on its work. This included an overview of the schemes that had been reviewed, reflections by the chair on recurring issues and lessons learnt through the panel process, along with updates on panel membership. Importantly, these sessions allowed the Planning Decisions Committee to communicate its priorities and concerns to the chair of the panel. For example, during a discussion about the quality of student housing, it was agreed that the panel should use the LLDC's Local Plan Policy BN.5 'Proposals for tall buildings' to demand greater generosity of internal accommodation, as a component of the requirement for exceptionally good design.

Development and planning relationships



Design quality and the Legacy Communities Scheme

The 2012 approval of a masterplan and design code for post-Games development in Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park provided a strong framework for achieving high-quality design. The outline approval created a requirement for Zonal Masterplans (ZMP) to be submitted to the planning authority, as well as reserved matters applications. This was in recognition of the scale of the Legacy Communities Scheme masterplan, and the need for more detailed masterplanning at a neighbourhood scale. It was also beneficial in terms of the delivery strategy, with LLDC entering development agreements and then working together with those partners to update and revise the ZMPs. The planning process that the Legacy Communities Scheme put in place allowed for strategic design principles and parameters to be signed off by the planning authority, often in advance, but at times alongside detailed design work on individual buildings.

Chobham Manor was the first neighbourhood in the Park that was referred to the Quality Review Panel. Initial discussions at a meeting in October 2012 focussed on the Zonal Masterplan. One of the strategic issues discussed at this meeting was the form of the public spaces at the heart of the scheme. The panel questioned the decision to create three linked spaces, framed by angled building lines. It noted that the Design Code was clear in encouraging development 'learning from London's residential streets and squares and their consistent composition'. The panel recommended a calmer and more familiar form of development, complementing the landmark buildings of Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park. Later reviews of buildings within the Chobham Manor neighbourhood looked at more detailed issues, from the materials and construction detailing to the way bikes and bins would be accommodated in an unobtrusive and convenient way.

There were changes to the Legacy Communities Scheme, particularly post 2015, where several neighbourhoods (Pudding Mill Lane, Bridgewater, Rick Roberts Way) were significantly re-masterplanned. The Mayor of London proposed significant changes in 2013, where one of the mixed-use residential neighbourhoods, Marshgate Wharf, was transformed into East Bank, a £1.1 billion cultural and education quarter largely spanning two sites, Stratford Waterfront and UCL East. The masterplanning of both sites commenced in 2015, with construction starting in 2019.

A third East Bank site is Here East, the former 2012 Press and Broadcast Centre turned major innovation and technology cluster, which will host the V&A East Storehouse (opening in 2025).

At the same time, substantial changes occurred to regulation and knowledge, particularly in relation to sustainability and net zero, but also climate resilience. By 2018, this led to updates of all the LLDC corporate policies on design quality (setting higher space standards and a clearer process), inclusive design standards and the Park Design Guide.¹⁴ These policies continue to guide all LLDC development. The Design Quality Policy¹⁵ and Inclusive Design Standards¹⁶ have also been referenced as part of Local Plan policies BN.4 and BN.6 and, as such, have been used to shape third party planning applications.

What LLDC design does...

Project teams:

Neighbourhoods
Public realm and landscape
Inclusive design
Design advice to PPDT

Project roles:

Client
Design advice
Policy
Estate management

Expertise:

Urban designers
Architects
Landscape architects
Inclusive designers

LLDC Local Plan

The LLDC's commitment to high-quality design is reflected in the Local Plan first adopted in 2015, and updated in 2020. The Quality Review Panel was consulted on design aspects of the Local Plan, bringing in a range of perspectives from panel members with expertise in town planning, landscape, heritage and townscape, and development delivery. The panel members taking part were asked to prepare by reading the draft documents, and at the meeting, LLDC policy officers highlighted where advice would be most helpful.

The panel encouraged the LLDC to think creatively about how the Local Plan could establish strong spatial planning, based on a thorough analysis of the landscape and built character of the area. It suggested this should build on the specific qualities of this riverine environment, and the distinctiveness of places within it such as Hackney Wick and Three Mills. It also made detailed comments, for example recommending that policy wording should provide the planning authority with tools to negotiate affordable workspace, in areas where developers would prefer to build residential accommodation.

Section 6 of the 2020 Local Plan relates to creating a high-quality built and natural environment. Section 6.5 states that 'the Legacy Corporation will implement the highest standard of design through development proposals. This will require an environmentally sensitive approach to design and a holistic view of sites and their immediate context, giving equal consideration to both urban settings and the landscapes in which developments are proposed. This will ensure that proposals enhance their unique built and natural context, and create locally distinctive places.'¹⁷ Section 6.6 goes on to say 'Design goes beyond the aesthetic and short term, and proposals will need to demonstrate how they contribute positively to the area. They will also need to demonstrate how the character, quality and function of an area can be improved for people, wildlife and the environment as a whole.'¹⁸ This addresses a common misconception that 'design' is synonymous with 'aesthetics' and supported the Quality Review Panel's role in championing design quality in the broadest sense. The LLDC Local Plan includes a suite of policies which promote high-quality design including BN.1 'Responding to place', BN.4 'Designing development, BN.5 'Proposals for tall buildings' and BN.6 'Inclusive design'.

Four Sub Areas were identified in the Local Plan: Hackney Wick and Fish Island; North Stratford and Eton Manor; Central Stratford and Southern Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park; and Bromley by Bow, Pudding Mill, Sugar House Island, and Mill Meads. These provided more locally-specific design policies. For example, in Hackney Wick there was a requirement to 'reinforce local distinctiveness (with) reference to the area's industrial past... (and) enhance existing yards and poor-quality and under-used passages and streets.'¹⁹

At every review meeting, LLDC officers would flag key policy considerations and ask for the panel's advice in relation to these. And each year an annual meeting was arranged by Frame Projects to bring the panel up to date with policy changes, as well as providing feedback on the impact of the panel's advice. While all of these policies have been used to secure high quality and subsequently award-winning developments, Policy BN.5 'Proposals for tall buildings' particularly has become strongly associated with the LLDC's objectives for exceptionally good design and has established something of a reputation both with LLDC officers and panel members.

Hackney Wick © LLDC / Gareth Gardener



Policy BN.5 Proposals for tall buildings (previously BN.10)

The LLDC Local Plan Policy BN.5 'Proposals for tall buildings' has been instrumental in ensuring the delivery of high-quality development in the LLDC area. It defined tall buildings as 'those that are higher than a Sub Area's prevailing or generally expected height as set out in this Plan.'²⁰ It went on to state that 'proposals for tall buildings will be considered acceptable where they exhibit exceptionally good design, demonstrating this through independent design review undertaken by a panel appointed by the local planning authority.'²¹

This gave the Quality Review Panel a clear remit to support the LLDC in determining planning applications for tall buildings, by assessing whether the requirement for exceptionally good design had been met. This meant that the panel was consistently consulted on tall building proposals at a pre-application stage, and the planning committee looked to the panel's reports as a key factor in their decision making.

Policy BN.5 (previously BN.10 in the LLDC 2015 Local Plan) provided clarity to applicants about not just the criteria against which tall buildings would be assessed, but also the process through which discussions on their design would be managed, and how both would inform decision making.

The wording of Policy BN.5 also made it clear that exceptionally good design was about far more than aesthetics, encompassing material choices, servicing arrangements, public realm, and townscape. The complexity of tall buildings justifies greater design scrutiny, based on detailed information, such as bay study construction drawings, to ensure high quality is achieved. Questions about cost and deliverability also need to be addressed, with evidence of consultation with potential sub-contractors for building elements to validate architectural concepts.

The policy assisted LLDC, with support from the panel, in negotiating high-quality design in the round for tall buildings. For example, the Jubilee House case study included in this report shows how the panel was able to use Policy BN.5 to raise the client's ambition to provide generous landscape and public realm that extended well beyond the site's boundary.

LLDC design policy and publications

The following policy and publications are referenced as best practice in LLDC's Local Plan. They provided valuable guidance for the Quality Review Panel in its role supporting the LLDC planning process. Panel members were briefed on these documents as part of their induction, at annual meetings, and in officer briefings highlighting aspects of particular relevance to each scheme being reviewed.

Planning authority documents:

Local Plan 2020 - 2036
 Hackney Wick and Fish Island SPD
 Pudding Mill SPD
 Bromley-by-Bow SPD
 Evening and Nighttime Economy SPD
 Getting to Net Zero
 Hackney Wick Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Guidelines
 Fish Island and White Post Lane Conservation Area and Management Guidelines
 Planning Authority Annual Monitoring Reports

Corporate policies and guidance:

Design Quality Policy
 Inclusive Design Standards
 Park Design Guide
 Green Infrastructure Guide
 Biodiversity Action Plan
 Creating Places that Work for Women and Girls Handbook
 Preparing for a 1.5 Degree Future

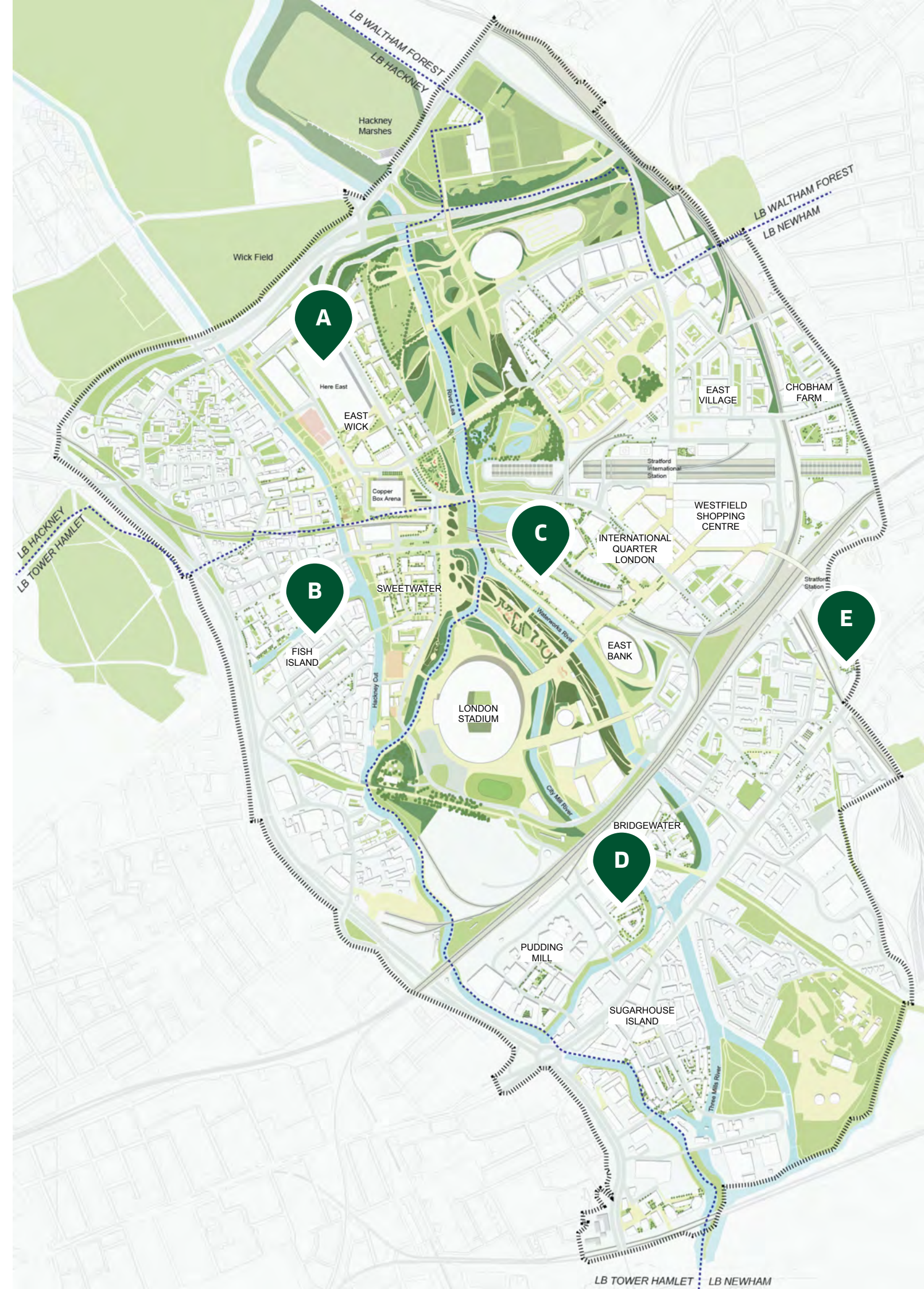
Other documents:

LLDC Area Characterisation Study
 Housing Density Study
 Employment Space Study
 Pudding Mill Land-use and Design Framework
 Youth Play Space Study
 HWFI Heat Network Study
 Sustainability Policy
 Engagement Policy

03. Case studies

- A. Here East
- B. Fish Island Village
- C. Stratford Waterfront
- D. Marshgate Lane
- E. Jubilee House

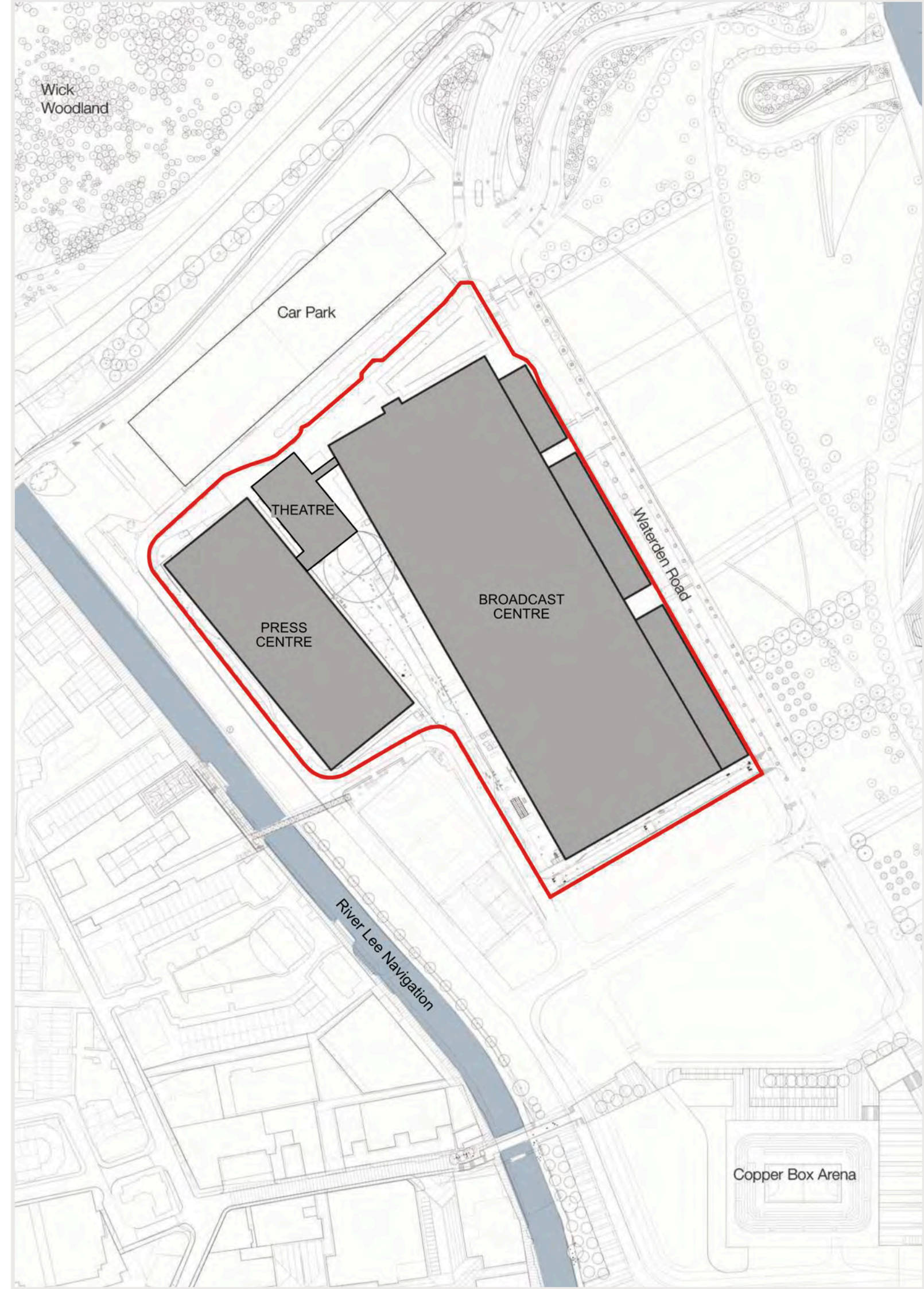
Map of the LLDC character areas, taken from the LLDC Characterisation Study © LLDC



Here East

Street address	London E9	
Borough	Hackney	
Typology	Media and technology hub	
Status	Completed 2018	
Applicant	Here East; Infinity SDC; Delancey	
Architect	Hawkins\Brown; Architecture 00	
Landscape architect	LDA Design	
Application type	Full	
Review date and type	12 December 2012	formal
	14 March 2013	formal
	11 July 2013	formal
	19 September 2013	formal
	21 November 2013	formal

Site plan © Hawkins\Brown





Here East was selected as a great example of a scheme that celebrates:

- an exemplar retrofit project that showcases the legacy of the 2012 Games;
- a great example of how high-quality design can result from a collaborative process between landowner, client, planning authority, and the Quality Review Panel;
- the value of a close working relationship between architect and landscape architect, and;
- good design that does not need to cost the earth.

Here East was one of the first schemes to be reviewed by the Quality Review Panel and one of the most important legacy schemes for the London Legacy Development Corporation. This case study looks at the vital role that the Quality Review Panel played to ensure the successful transformation of the 2012 Games' former press and broadcast centre into a thriving media and technology hub. The success of Here East established the credibility of the panel in helping the LLDC to fulfil its vision of a dynamic new heart for east London, creating opportunities for local people, and driving innovation and growth. The expertise and experience of its members was a key factor in the positive influence that the panel had from the very outset of its operation.

Creating high-quality spaces and a sense of place

The main challenge in the design of Here East was to transform three extra-large buildings into high-quality spaces that would suit the purpose of their future occupants, a mix of large scale and small start-up businesses and academia. There was also a need to improve the public realm around the buildings and create meaningful connections into the Park for the local community across the River Lee Navigation. The Quality Review Panel's ability to be a critical friend to the design team, simultaneously supporting and challenging its design, was crucial to the momentum and success of this early project.

Aerial view © Jason Hawkes

Collaboration borne out of early challenges

From the outset, the applicant had a very strong and exciting vision for this new place.

“We made some early bold statements that we would have 5,200 people working here, bringing high-quality jobs into the space. The local community felt disenfranchised and cut off due to a six foot steel fence running around the park and we wanted to break down all those barriers and say this is a place for you – good jobs, qualifications, scholarships, intern programmes, work with schools. We wanted it to be appealing to the local community.”

Gavin Poole, CEO, Here East

However, at the first review meeting, the panel challenged the applicant team on the quality of its design concept. It felt that the proposal lacked a strong vision for architecture and public spaces to match the ambition of the brief. The panel suggested that clearer thinking was needed on routes and entrances, to humanise the vast Press and Broadcast Centre and to link it to the surrounding area.

The applicant responded immediately to the panel’s comments by bringing LDA Design onboard as the landscape architect. They had extensive experience of designing public spaces in Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park and the client was confident that they would be able to create strong connections between Here East and the Park.

At the second review meeting, in March 2013, the panel felt that the design team had made some progress toward establishing an architectural vision. It acknowledged the challenge of transforming the grand scale and utilitarian nature of the existing buildings and spaces into a warm and welcoming place, but it still felt that further work was needed. In response the client made further changes to the design team, appointing Hawkins\Brown as lead architect.

“This was the first project, alongside Chobham Manor, considered by the Quality Review Panel. To say that it wasn’t good enough was very tricky and quite bold. The importance of holding a line on design quality can’t be underestimated. A combination of factors, including good judgement and a receptive client meant that it ended up being a success story.”

Anthony Hollingsworth, Director of Planning Policy and Decisions, LLDC

Drawing of super-graphic façade © Hawkins\Brown

The new design team’s vision matched the aspiration that the client, the LLDC, and the Quality Review Panel all shared for Here East. From that point on, a highly collaborative design process evolved between a receptive applicant, a new planning authority eager to establish high standards for design quality, and a newly established, but highly experienced, Quality Review Panel.

“I think part of it was we were genuinely very excited. The original drawing Hawkins\Brown pitched to us is still on my wall. We would get to review meetings 30 minutes ahead of time and we took models and drawings to help convey and bring the panel into our excitement. It was not so much about it looking beautiful and award-winning, although we set those targets, but conscious of cost, our excitement was the impact this could have in this area.”

Gavin Poole, CEO, Here East

At their first meeting with the Quality Review Panel, Hawkins\Brown presented fresh ideas for a super-graphic architecture and an innovative concept for the reuse of the Gantry. The panel would review the proposals on two further occasions over the next four months, serving as a sounding board for ideas and offering suggestions for further refinements that could be made to the scheme.

“Only when Hawkins\Brown was appointed could the panel see a real opportunity, especially with their idea of the super-graphic design.”

Peter Studdert, chair, Quality Review Panel



The flexibility to be receptive to alternative design solutions

From the very outset the applicant had challenged two key requirements of the Olympic masterplan in relation to the International Broadcast Centre. First, that the Gantry (a large, gridded steel structure that extended the length of the building, which held the air-conditioning units) should be removed and recycled. Second, that a new east-west cycle and pedestrian access route should be provided through the centre. The Quality Review Panel, in its role as a critical friend, supported and challenged the design team in its exploration of alternative design solutions for these two aspects, ensuring that any alternative solution would benefit both Here East and the wider local community.

“It was a relationship built on trust, which is very important with different parties trying to achieve a common goal.”

David Bickle, architect, Hawkins\Brown

The Gantry: retention and reuse, rather than recycling

The panel supported the design team’s proposal to retain and reuse the Gantry and felt that the idea of a ‘cabinet of curiosities’ (to provide 21 small businesses with the opportunity to imagine their own box) had the potential to create a unique and exciting architecture. The panel continued its role as a critical friend, as the design team worked through various ideas of how it could actually design this cabinet of curiosities.

When the novel WikiHouse solution was developed with Architecture 00, the panel made suggestions on how the design could be further refined. It supported the lively and colourful steel structure of the Gantry, but suggested toning the colour down from fluorescent orange to a more subtle tone that would be better suited to its location opposite a future residential development. It welcomed the provision of a design code to bring coherence to the 21 business units, and gave suggestions on its structure and content. It also suggested that some flexibility was needed, given that it was not known exactly who would occupy the spaces.

“Rather ironically, the Gantry has become the poster child for Here East. It is of a domestic scale that people can relate to and there is delight in its external appearance.”

David Bickle, architect, Hawkins\Brown

The Gantry © Rory Gardiner



Achieving good east-west walking and cycle routes

The panel had asked the design team to reconsider fulfilling the requirement of the Olympic masterplan to provide a new east-west pedestrian and cycle route through the International Broadcast Centre. The route would avoid the need for the public to make a long detour around the large building. The panel also felt that it would make a positive contribution to the creative social interaction and dynamic work environment of Here East. When the design team continued to resist, the panel requested that it demonstrate that an alternative successful solution could be provided.

“It was a big issue at the time to suddenly decide not to provide that key walking and cycle route of the original masterplan. The Quality Review Panel were very supportive and it was helpful for the applicant and the LLDC to be able to have a clear response from the panel on this issue.”

Anthony Hollingsworth, Director of Planning Policy and Decisions, LLDC

Great architecture at a relatively low cost

The panel supported Hawkins\Brown's bold, super-graphic approach to the architecture from the outset, welcoming the iconic new character that it would give to the utilitarian media and broadcasting buildings. The design team's approach to retrofit the centre provides an exemplar in sustainable design, demonstrating how innovative design can be achieved at a relatively low cost.

“The broadcast centre is enormous, so we looked hard at the character of the existing building and considered the minimum means we could use to achieve the maximum benefit to afford that transformational change. It was a tin box in front of a lovely Allies and Morrison office building, which we did very little to. Sometimes you don't have to design much, you just need to bring it to life, cherish it and value it.”

David Bickle, architect, Hawkins\Brown

The panel worked with the design team to refine the design of the buildings. The dazzle pattern proposed for the façade of the International Broadcast Centre was toned down to make it less prominent where, in contrast, the entrances to the building were given greater prominence. Similarly, the prominence of the Main Press Centre entrances that opened onto the Yard was improved. The side of the centre facing the canal was developed further, to draw attention to the ground level shops, but to create a calmer appearance overall in contrast to the exuberant architecture elsewhere.

“It was a journey of moving from a utilitarian box, especially the Gantry on Waterden Road, to a good place to work that also celebrated its utilitarian nature. Entrances were discussed a lot. They could easily be missed out, but they can make or break a scheme. The key was to imagine what it would be like to live and work there.”

Peter Studdert, chair, Quality Review Panel



A lively canal frontage with pedestrian priority © Rory Gardiner

Transforming the landscape at minimal cost

When LDA Design joined the design team, they addressed the panel's concerns regarding the need to make better use of the sunny canal-side area to the west of the Main Press Centre. It was transformed from an area used for servicing and refuse into a village green, where pedestrians have priority, and shops and cafes create a lively frontage onto the canal.

However, the panel felt that other areas of the landscape had become overly complex. It suggested that a more industrial character of public realm would sit better alongside the architecture and provide more durable space. The panel encouraged greater collaboration between architect and landscape architect and this paid off. The final landscape design for Makers Yard was based on the principles of Grazing, Gathering and Making, to provide a great backdrop for flexible use at different times of the day and in different weather conditions. Cost was kept to a minimum by retaining the existing hard landscaping. Removing sections of this, to introduce strips of lawn and planting added visual interest and created natural dividers, adding to the flexibility and transformative character of the public realm.

"The landscape is simple, fairly workman-like spaces that people can spill out onto and use. Food trucks come and transform the whole area, events are planned, there is seasonal interest with the planting, which is sublime and offers a soft counterpoint to the industrial nature of the space."

David Bickle, architect, Hawkins\Brown



Makers Yard - a backdrop for flexible use throughout the day and year-round © Francesco Montaguti



A success story beyond expectations

Twelve years on, Here East is a multi-award winning innovation campus for open collaboration, accommodating large scale and small start-up business and academia. It accommodates not the estimated 5,200, but 6,500 people.²²

It is testament to the value that a good Quality Review Panel can bring to the design process. This early success story helped to establish the reputation of the newly formed planning authority. It cemented the role of the Quality Review Panel in setting high design standards for the future development in the LLDC area.

“The panel pushed us hard, but were supportive as well.”

Gavin Poole, CEO, Here East

“When you get a really good Quality Review Panel they can support the scheme beyond measure.”

David Bickle, architect, Hawkins\Brown

Awards won

RICS Social Impact Awards 2020 Project of the year

RICS Social Impact Awards 2020 Commercial

RIBA London Awards 2019 Regional Award

BCO National Awards 2018 Refurbished / Recycled Workplace

AJ100 Awards 2018 Building of the Year

AJ100 Awards 2018 Best Use of Technology

AJ Retrofit Awards 2018 Offices (over 10,000 square metres)

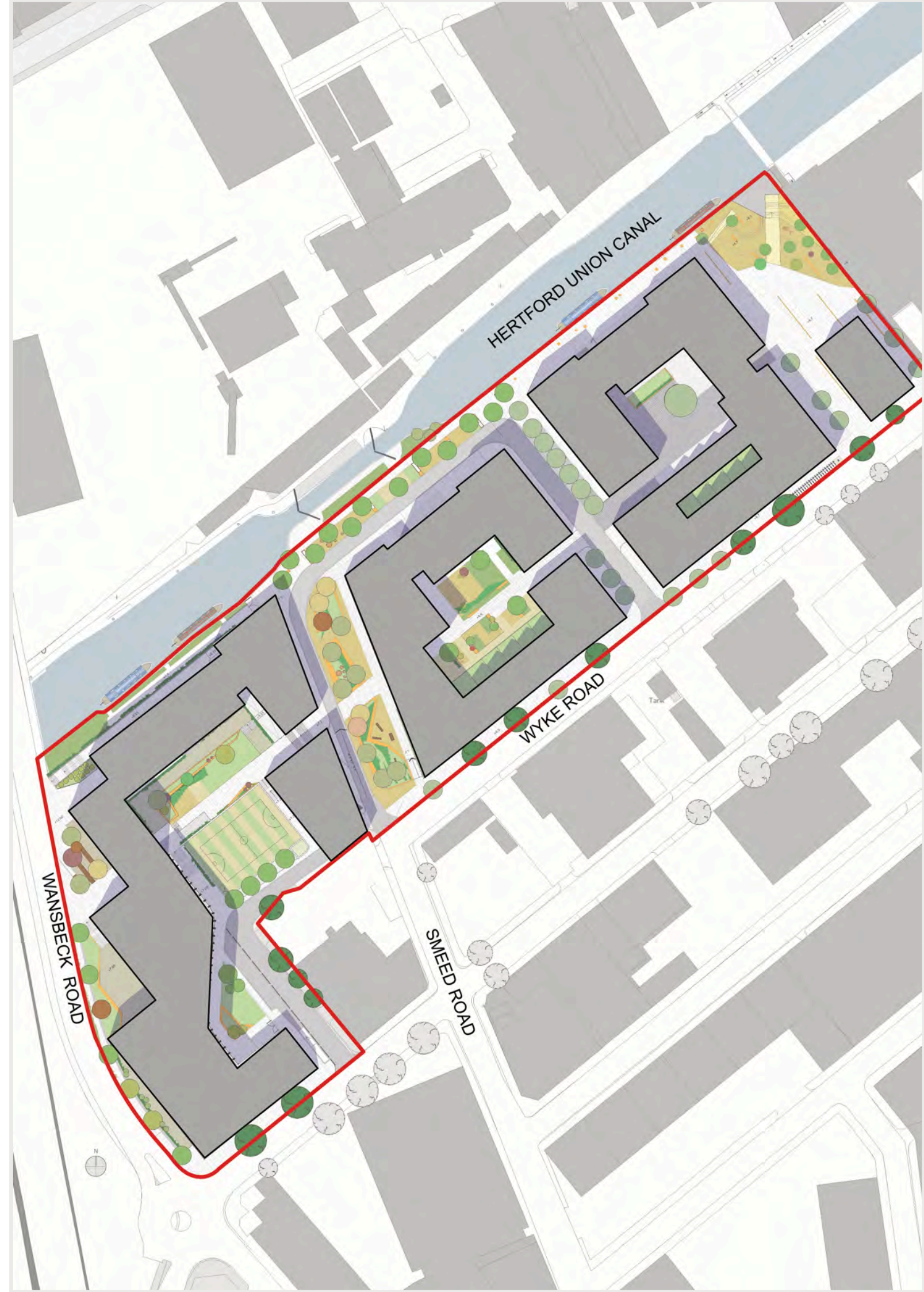
Entrance space © Rory Gardiner

Fish Island Village

Street address	Neptune Wharf	
Borough	Tower Hamlets	
Typology	Large scale masterplan	
Status	Partially complete	
Applicant	Neptune Group Ltd	
Architect	Masterplan: Stockwool	
	Lanterna: Lyndon Goode Architects	
Landscape architect	Masterplan: The Landscape Partnership	
	Lanterna: Farrer Huxley	
Application type	Outline / Reserved Matters (Lanterna)	
Review date and type	Masterplan:	
	15 November 2012	formal
	5 March 2013	formal
	3 June 2013	formal
	28 August 2013	chair's
	17 October 2013	formal
	Brief for design competition:	
	30 April 2015	workshop
	Lanterna:	
	27 November 2015	formal
	19 May 2016	chair's

Site plan © Stockwool

LLDC QRP Appraisal





Fish Island Village was selected as a great example of a scheme that celebrates:

- the high design standard set by the LLDC planning authority for the first major development in Fish Island;
- the value of a strong outline scheme to set high standards for reserved matters applications, ensuring that high-quality development is delivered;
- the breadth of the Quality Review Panel's work, including the suggestion that a design competition be held to select an architect for Block A, and the request that the competition brief be brought to the panel for review.

Fish Island Village, formerly known as Neptune Wharf, was the first major redevelopment in Fish Island and, along with Chobham Manor, it was one of the first comprehensive mixed-use redevelopments in the LLDC area. The large brownfield site was the former home of the Scottish and Newcastle Brewery, fronting onto the Hertford Union Canal. In November 2013, an outline planning application was approved for four phases of development on the site, including up to 18 buildings to provide 522 new homes and a range of non-residential spaces, including a new primary school.

This case study looks at how the Quality Review Panel helped to secure a strong outline scheme that would set a high standard for the later reserved matters schemes. It also shows the breadth of the panel's work in supporting LLDC officers to ensure that high-quality design would be delivered.

Aerial view of Lanterna © Rory Gardiner

Tower Hamlets' Fish Island Area Action Plan

The planning application for Fish Island Village was submitted just as the LLDC took over as the planning authority for the area. As such, it was one of the first and largest schemes to be reviewed by the new Quality Review Panel. The fact that it had been submitted prior to any review would bring its own challenges.

The LLDC did not have its own Local Plan at that time, but was working to the policies inherited from the borough of Tower Hamlets. This included the Fish Island Area Action Plan,²³ which sought to retain and enhance the distinctive character of Fish Island, while allowing for managed transformation of the area to deliver new homes and revitalised employment space.

The action plan set the prevailing height for that area of Fish Island at four to six storeys. It set out aspirations for the opportunity site to include employment and community uses, galleries, small scale retail uses and residential accommodation, including affordable homes. Local open space was also to be provided, as well as safeguarding approximately 0.5 hectares of land for the future provision of a primary school. In addition, improved pedestrian and cycle connectivity was to be provided across the Hertford Union Canal, to the north, as well as enhanced connections to the canal.

Hertford Union Canal towpath © Fred Haworth



Aspirations for a strong outline scheme

At the initial review of the scheme, in November 2012, the applicant presented its proposal for 21 buildings, ranging in height from two to 14 storeys, to provide up to 807 new homes. The proposal did not align with Tower Hamlet's vision for the site, nor with the high aspirations that LLDC officers had for the first development in Fish Island.

The proposed height of up to 14 storeys was well above the recommended four to six storeys. At the first Quality Review Panel meeting to discuss the scheme, the panel felt that the design team's narrative reflected the unique context of Fish Island. However, it did not feel that the proposed scheme would make for a successful place, due to its excessive scale, poor quality public spaces and the architecture's lack of robustness. The panel supported the design team's proposed new public routes through the site and the access they provided to the canal, but it otherwise recommended a fundamental rethink of the scheme.

“The clarity of the panel's comments, especially in the first review session were helpful from an officer's perspective. The panel was helpful in terms of height, but it was also clear in emphasising that it was not only the height, but the visual impact of the development on the Hertford Union Canal that needed to be considered.”

Allison De Marco, former Head of Planning Policy and Decisions, LLDC

A further two reviews of the scheme took place over the following seven months. The design team responded with incremental changes in the direction that the panel had suggested. Amendments to the scheme's footprint and massing had resulted in a reduction in the number of homes, from 807 to 634, and an increase in the amenity space provided in each of the Wansbeck, Ripboth and Neptune yards. Improvements had also been made to the architectural expression so that it responded more appropriately to the character of Hackney Wick and Fish Island. The panel also supported the proposed mix of uses including new homes, commercial space and managed workspace, and welcomed the activation that they brought to the area. However, despite these changes, the panel was unable to support the scheme for approval as it felt that the excessive scale would have a negative impact on the setting of the Hertford Union Canal and compromise the quality of the resulting development.

In an effort to increase the number of homes in the lower height buildings, the initial generous floor to ceiling heights had been reduced and the scheme did not meet the vision for high-quality development, of a human scale, to establish a successful new community.

In August 2013, the design team returned to the Quality Review Panel with an improved scheme of an appropriate height and density, which the panel felt was acceptable for the site. The number of homes had been reduced to 578 and the maximum heights of the buildings reduced from 14 storeys, down to seven storeys, plus a single 11 storey tower.



The masterplan area, with Lanterna (left) set behind Lofthouse Square © Killian O Sullivan

Ensuring the delivery of high-quality detailed design

It was at this point that the Peabody Trust expressed an interest in purchasing the site. The Trust's track record in delivering high-quality housing gave the Quality Review Panel and LLDC officers confidence that the design, construction and management of the scheme would be successfully resolved. The panel supported planning officers in seeking legal confirmation of the involvement of the Peabody Trust, as part of the outline planning approval.

At a final review of the scheme, in October 2013, the panel gave its support to the revised planning application. The scheme had evolved into a part detailed, part outline application with two of the most prominent buildings to be submitted in outline: Block Q was a residential building, which at 11 storeys in height was above the prevailing height for the area; and Block A fronted onto Lofthouse Square and had been envisaged as 'an architectural jewel' by the design team from the outset.

The panel supported the use of Section 106 agreements requiring architectural competitions as a way of ensuring that the best design teams would be appointed for these two key buildings. The panel also suggested that the LLDC officers should be included in the process of selecting the winning design team, and that the Quality Review Panel should have an opportunity to help the Peabody Trust shape the competition brief.

High-quality detailing © Rory Gardiner



An architectural competition for Block A

The Peabody Trust purchased the Fish Island Village site in April 2014. The Trust already had a comprehensive framework of architects and it invited members of its small projects panel to enter the competition to design Block A in Lofthouse Square. As the panel had suggested, the LLDC were included in the selection process and this gave the planning authority confidence in a positive outcome from the very outset.

The panel reviewed the brief for the architectural competition and suggested refinements to the briefing information and submission requirements. The aim was to ensure that the bid process would be efficient, and that the submissions would be of a high standard. For example, it suggested that preliminary information on the proposed bridge across the Hertford Union Canal was provided to the entrants, given that the bridge would be an integral part of Lofthouse Square.

“Part of the success of the scheme was how the bridge would land in Lofthouse Square. It is a very important connection into the McGrath site, on the north side of the canal.”

Peter Studdert, chair, Quality Review Panel

A good competition resulting in an award-winning design

The Quality Review Panel were instrumental in the development of a good competition brief for Block A that informed a great design. Lyndon Goode Architects, one of the practices on Peabody’s small projects panel, won the competition.

This team developed the external appearance and layout of Block A, which was renamed as Lanterna. The building provides 16 apartments and a ground floor cafe-bar-restaurant fronting onto Lofthouse Square and activated on all sides. The Quality Review Panel found much to admire in the design. It felt that the architectural expression, including a dark herringbone overlay, resulted in a highly distinctive building. The panel reviewed the proposals on two occasions, supporting the team in refining its design.

“It is always inspiring to hear people talk about your designs from a fresh viewpoint and particularly from another designer’s viewpoint, so a review meeting with the Quality Review Panel is a really good moment to stand back and look at the wider view of the project and take on board ideas that you may not have considered.”

The panel also suggested keeping the architect involved through to construction. We were able to ensure that Peabody’s requirements were delivered, including for a durable and low maintenance building. This quality might have been lost through swaps with supposedly equivalent products selected by a contractor. We were able to drive value and meet the budget while being confident that less tangible aspects were also met.”

David Lyndon, architect, Lyndon Goode Architects

Awards won

RIBA London Award 2024 for Fish Island Village

Collaborative winners: Haworth Tompkins, Lyndon Goode Architects, Pitman Tozer and Bureau de Change

2019 Planning Award for Placemaking at High Densities

2018 First Time Buyers Readers’ Award

Lanterna © Rory Gardiner

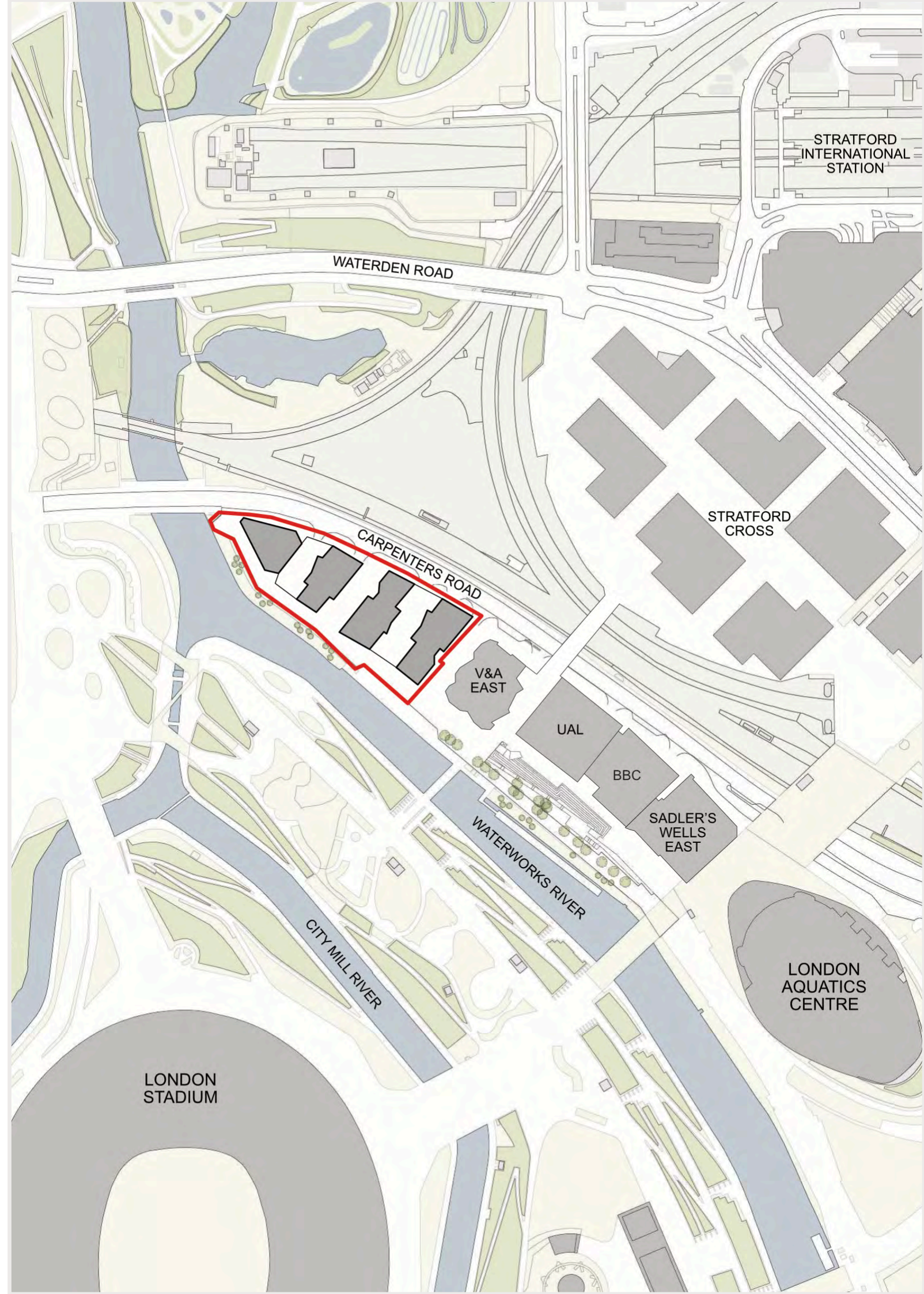


Stratford Waterfront

Street address	Stratford Waterfront, E20	
Borough	Newham	
Typology	Masterplan for cultural, education, residential and public realm	
Status	Cultural / education: Partially completed Residential: Start on site Spring 2026	
Applicant	LLDC	
Architect	Masterplan: Allies and Morrison Residential: Howells; O'Donnell + Tuomey	
Landscape architect	LDA Design	
Application type	Detailed: Cultural and education Outline: Residential	
Review date and type	Masterplan:	
	18 February 2016	formal
	14 April 2016	formal
	8 November 2016	formal
	7 September 2017	formal
	16 November 2017	formal
	22 February 2018	formal
	Design code:	
	29 November 2018	formal

Site Plan © Howells

LLDC QRP Appraisal





Stratford Waterfront was selected as a great example of a scheme that celebrates:

- the value of a strong outline scheme to set high standards for reserved matters applications, to ensure that high-quality development is delivered;
- the contribution of a design code to defining how high density housing could be accommodated next to the cultural quarter;
- the challenge of meeting housing targets when the original Legacy Communities Scheme did not include the cultural element.

The approved Stratford Waterfront residential development will comprise 700 new homes, in four towers up to 26 storeys in height. Construction of the towers will commence in 2026 and they will be part of the Stratford Waterfront neighbourhood. This prominent site, in the centre of Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park, occupies a thin strip of land to the north of the London Aquatics Centre, wedged between Carpenters Road to the north and east and the Waterworks River to the west. The Waterfront is part of East Bank, London's new cultural and education district in Stratford.

This case study illustrates the role that the Quality Review Panel played in helping to secure a strong outline scheme for the residential towers, including a robust set of parameter plans and a design code. These set high standards for the detailed design stage ensuring the delivery of high-quality high-density housing next to the newly completed cultural quarter.

Aerial view of emerging cultural and education quarter © Jason Hawkes

A new cultural quarter for east London

Originally the entire Stratford Waterfront site was to be mixed-use housing, as outlined in the Legacy Communities Scheme. However, in 2013 the Mayor of London announced that proposals for a cultural and education quarter should be located here. The site is located in what was the heart of the Park during the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games. Ambitious plans would see a large cultural investment that would attract an 'estimated 1.5 million additional visitors to the Park, generate 2,500 new jobs and an estimated £1.5 billion of economic value to Stratford and the surrounding area.'²⁴ This reduced the amount of housing that could be delivered here and increased the number of homes needed on LLDC's remaining development sites.

The residential component of Stratford Waterfront was a vital part of this proposed neighbourhood. It would create a new community and the sale of homes would assist in part funding the cultural and education uses.

Allies and Morrison were appointed as the design team for the Stratford Waterfront masterplan, having won a two-stage international design competition following an extensive brief and visioning process led by the LLDC as lead client and landowner. The masterplan included the East Bank cultural and education quarter and the residential neighbourhood. The design team noted two major design challenges. First, to create a coherent plan bringing together the requirements of each institution: BBC Music Studios; UAL's London College of Fashion; Sadler's Wells East; and V&A East Museum. Second, to accommodate approximately 600 new homes, in addition to the cultural and education quarter, on 'a very tight, 1.8 hectare linear site ... to realise a new, multi-faceted but coherent and beautiful piece of city, particular to east London.'²⁵

The cultural and education quarter would be completed ahead of the residential accommodation, as the LLDC would seek a development partner for the residential element. It was therefore essential that the LLDC had confidence that the proposed residential towers would sit comfortably alongside the newly completed cultural and education quarter, and also within the surrounding context of the Park, given its visible and central location.

A hybrid planning application was proposed, with detailed planning applications for the cultural and education buildings, and an outline application for the residential component. Before the Quality Review Panel would support the proposals, they needed to be confident that there would be sufficient details and guidance within the outline element of the application to deliver a scheme worthy of this prominent site.

Sadler's Wells, O'Donnell + Tuomey © Peter Cook





Securing high-quality design in an outline planning application

At the initial review of the masterplan, in February 2016, the panel acknowledged the challenges faced by the design team. It was encouraged by the amount of work that had already been undertaken. However, the panel persistently pushed for further improvements. In particular, it recommended that the heights of the two 47 storey residential towers, should be reduced, given the LLDC Local Plan set the prevailing height for Sub Area 3 at 30 metres. The panel felt that the sheer scale of these towers would have a detrimental impact on the character and quality of the Park, and would detract from the elegance of the Stratford Waterfront and East Bank cultural and education quarter. Buildings of this scale would also dominate key buildings, such as the nearby London Aquatics Centre.

The panel recommended that, rather than a hybrid application, the whole masterplan should be submitted as a detailed planning application. It felt that it would be challenging for an outline planning application for such tall buildings to safeguard the outstanding level of architecture required to meet the Local Plan's Policy BN.10 'Proposals for tall buildings' (which became Policy BN.5 in the 2020 LLDC Local Plan).

However, due to the applicant's need for flexibility in seeking a prospective development partner, this was resisted. The panel therefore suggested that planning officers put two measures in place to help give both the panel and planning officers confidence that the highest design quality would be delivered. First, the panel suggested that the design code and parameter plans should be independently tested. Second, it supported the planning officers' use of Section 106 legal agreements to require that clear design management protocols be applied at the detailed design stage to protect quality during delivery.

Carpenters Yard leading to the residential entrances © Howells

St Paul's Cathedral, the catalyst for a revised masterplan

It was not until the discovery that the two 47 storey towers would encroach on the protected view of St Paul's Cathedral from King Henry's Mound in Richmond Park that the masterplan was revised and the two towers were reworked into four buildings up to 26 storeys in height.

"The primary difference between the first and second versions of the masterplan, in response to the Mayor's concerns about the impact on the view of St Paul's from King Henry's Mound in Richmond Park, was the expansion in the amount of land available for the residential accommodation and a reduction in the amount of land available for the cultural and education uses. From the initial looser version, with the public realm weaving between them, we came to a much denser, terrace like layout for the cultural and education buildings, with shared party walls and a simpler arrangement of external spaces."

Alex Wraight, architect, Allies and Morrison

This unlocked a revised masterplan, that the panel was able to broadly support, notwithstanding its scale and massing. However, it suggested fresh thinking in regard to the character of the place. The panel noted the need for the architectural identity of the cultural buildings to be reinvented in response to their new arrangement as a continuous terrace, rather than separate buildings as had been initially proposed.

The panel provided a sounding board for the design team as it worked through options around the new sequence and positioning of the buildings within the terrace, giving each institution its own identity. In addition, the cultural quarter and residential buildings needed to create a cohesive whole, while providing the residents with some privacy from the footfall of the four cultural buildings. There was also discussion on how the level change could be used to create an inviting and welcoming place for the public, that would feel like a natural extension of the Park.

In the end it was agreed that the residential buildings should be located at the furthest point away from the main route between Westfield Stratford City and the London Stadium. The levels of public realm were used to create Waterfront Square, a common space at the end of Tallow Bridge, around which the cultural and residential buildings focussed.

"The Quality Review Panel were pretty supportive of our rationale for the new masterplan, but challenged us on issues such as finding the right balance between cohesion and difference in the individual buildings. Beyond the design, the panel's wider concerns were focussed on the format of the application and the amount of detail we would get to, particularly with the residential accommodation, which was to be submitted in outline. While the buildings were significantly lower than the first iteration, they were still considered tall buildings so rightly subject to close scrutiny with respect to their design quality."

Alex Wraight, architect, Allies and Morrison



The four residential towers beside V&A East Museum © Howells

A robust set of parameter plans and a design code

The panel emphasised the need for the design team to effectively translate its aspirations for high quality into a design code and parameter plans. These needed to ensure that the sophistication evident in the outline scheme would be translated into the detailed design. It would be essential that the residential component was well-integrated with the cultural and education quarter, even though they would be developed separately.

As part of the revised design brief, the LLDC development team also insisted on a more detailed illustrative scheme. Although it was not required for consideration during planning, it provided a useful example of the quality and functionality of a potential scheme, based on compliance with the parameters, codes and development specification. This helped inform conversations with the Quality Review Panel on these elements.

The design codes needed to be prescriptive enough to ensure that the desired outcome would be achieved, while also allowing some flexibility so that, if a better design solution was found, it could be implemented. For example, the prominence of the 'prow' building at the north end of the site was important to distinguish it from the other three residential blocks. Similarly, the depth and relief of the overall composition of the four residential buildings needed to be retained, to avoid the perception of a 'wall' of buildings. The panel emphasised the need for hierarchies of scale between the residential buildings and the cultural and education buildings to be specified in the parameter plans and design code. It also recommended that the code should set out the fundamental principles underlying the scheme's architecture and materials, while allowing for interpretation to encourage a richness of character.

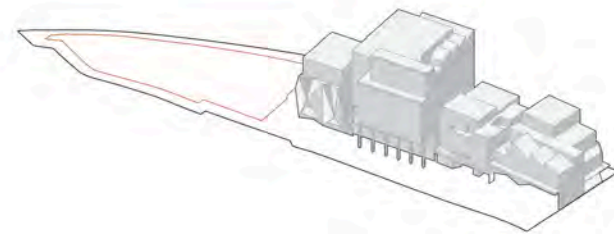
"Design codes were important, as there was a danger of having an outline permission for tall buildings without any clear guidance as to what high quality would mean in that context, so producing a design code and especially independent testing was an important principle to follow. Independent testing of the control documents provided a policy justification for going forward with an outline permission even though it still needed to comply with Policy BN.10."

Peter Studdert, chair, Quality Review Panel

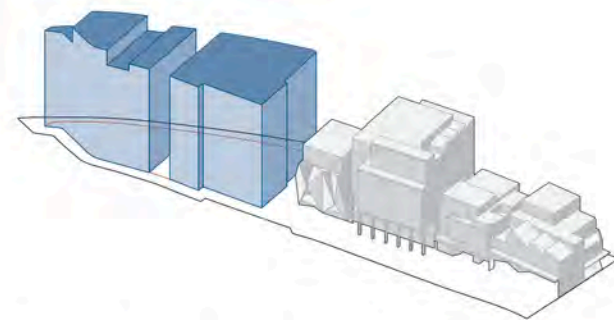
V&A East Museum (foreground) and UAL's London College of Fashion © Alex Wraight



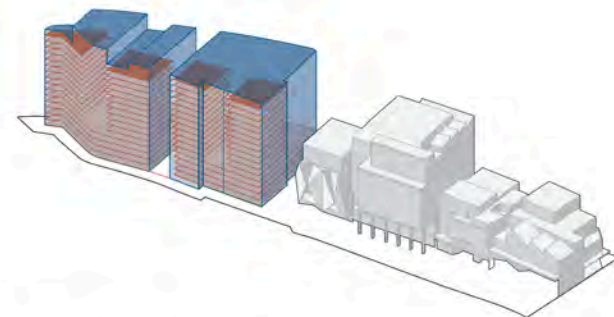
The following sequence of diagrams illustrate how Design Codes work in conjunction with the Development Specification and Framework and the Parameter Plans, showing how each document controls a particular aspect of the development in order to minimise overlap and conflict.



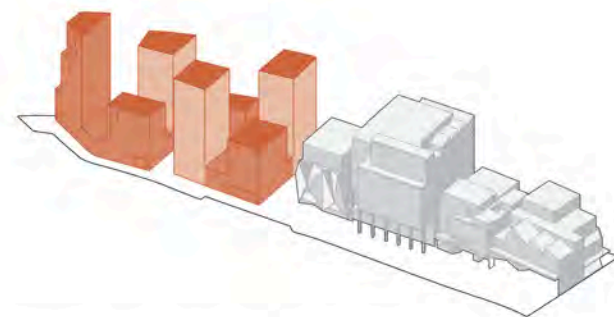
Step One: Apply development zone boundaries according to the Development Parcels Parameter Plan.



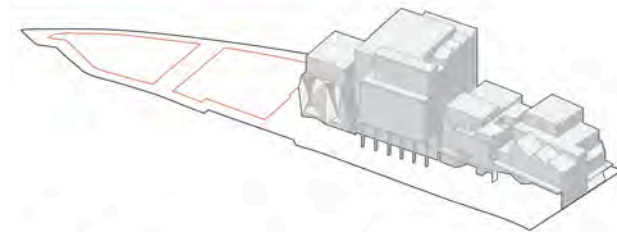
Step three: Set upper limits of development height according to the Maximum Heights Parameter Plan.



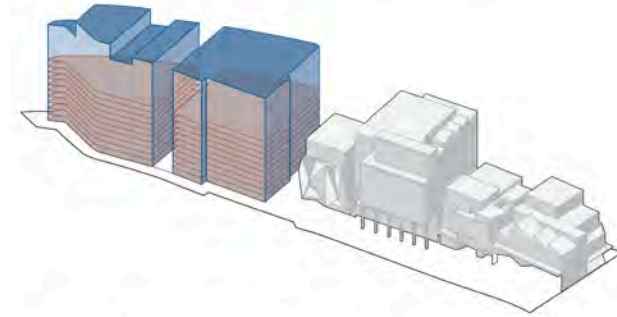
Step five: Comply with tall building floorplate maximums set out in the Design Code.



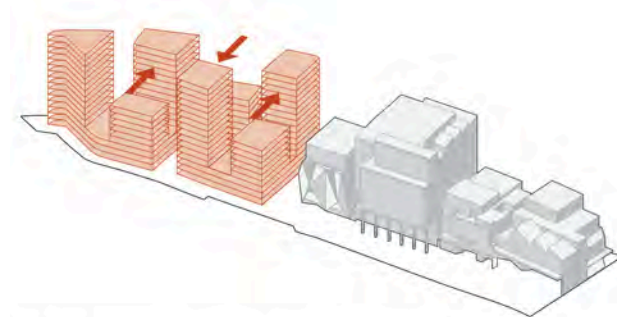
Step seven: Articulate building design in compliance with the Design Code.



Step Two: Establish required public route through the development zone within the allowances detailed in the Public Realm Parameter Plan.



Step four: Determine maximum building area permitted as set out in the Development Specification.



Step six: Arrange massing of buildings in compliance with the Design Code and the Environmental Statement.

Independent testing of the design code and parameter plans

The panel also suggested that the control documents should be independently tested, and LLDC's Planning Policy and Decisions Team arranged for Tibbalds Planning and Urban Design and Karakusevic Carson Architects to undertake these tests. The design team responded positively to the refinements suggested by the panel, LLDC officers and the independent testing, which all contributed to a robust set of control documents.

At a post submission review, in November 2018, the Quality Review Panel stated that it felt that the framework provided by the design code and parameter plans had the potential to encourage 'outstanding architecture' that would comply with LLDC's policy on tall buildings.

"Independent review of the design code was absolutely vital to give the Quality Review Panel confidence that they could support the scheme. The panel's support allowed officers to make a positive recommendation to the Planning Decisions Committee that this would be a high-quality and well-designed scheme, to match the quality of the cultural quarter and the wider Park."

Richard McFerran, Team Leader, Planning Policy and Decisions, LLDC

Application sequence of development control documents for Stratford Waterfront © Allies and Morrison

Application of the parameter plans and design code in detailed designs

The control documents enabled planning officers to hold the LLDC development team, its joint venture partner, Ballymore, and the reserved matters design team accountable to the delivery of high-quality design. The design codes provided a clear set of guidelines for the design team to work to and for the LLDC officers to check against. In instances where there was a deviation from the design code, officers could make an informed assessment as to whether the alternative design solution still fulfilled the design objective of the code.

“The heavy lifting was done by the team at Allies and Morrison. The principles and structure of the control documents were perfect – everything was considered. It is a real skill to be able to strike the right balance between being prescriptive and retaining flexibility in design codes.”

Areta Soare, architect, Howells

From the LLDC development team’s point of view, it was very helpful to demonstrate that the design code and parameter plans worked and that sufficient due diligence had been undertaken on the design proposals. The control documents also provided clear guidelines as to the level of quality that was expected when LLDC went out to secure a private sector development partner, with the permission forming part of their contractual requirements.

“We had a high degree of certainty that this was achievable, viable, deliverable and that helped us when we started working with Howells – the broad moves had been worked through and were correct. The approved reserved matters application is different to what was proposed, but it maintains the ethos and direction set within the design codes. It demonstrates that we have hit the right level and have been able to deliver it.”

Peter Maxwell, Director of Design, Development, LLDC

Waterfront promenade, LDA Design © Howells

A new benchmark for outline planning applications

Stratford Waterfront set an important precedent for future outline planning applications. In the new Local Plan, published in 2020, Policy BN.10 was renamed as Policy BN.5 ‘Proposals for tall buildings’. In addition to Policy BN.5 reiterating the need for the Quality Review Panel’s endorsement for all proposals for tall buildings it also stipulated that any outline application for tall buildings must be accompanied by a ‘sufficiently detailed design code, coordinated with parameter plans, secured as part of any planning permission.’²⁶

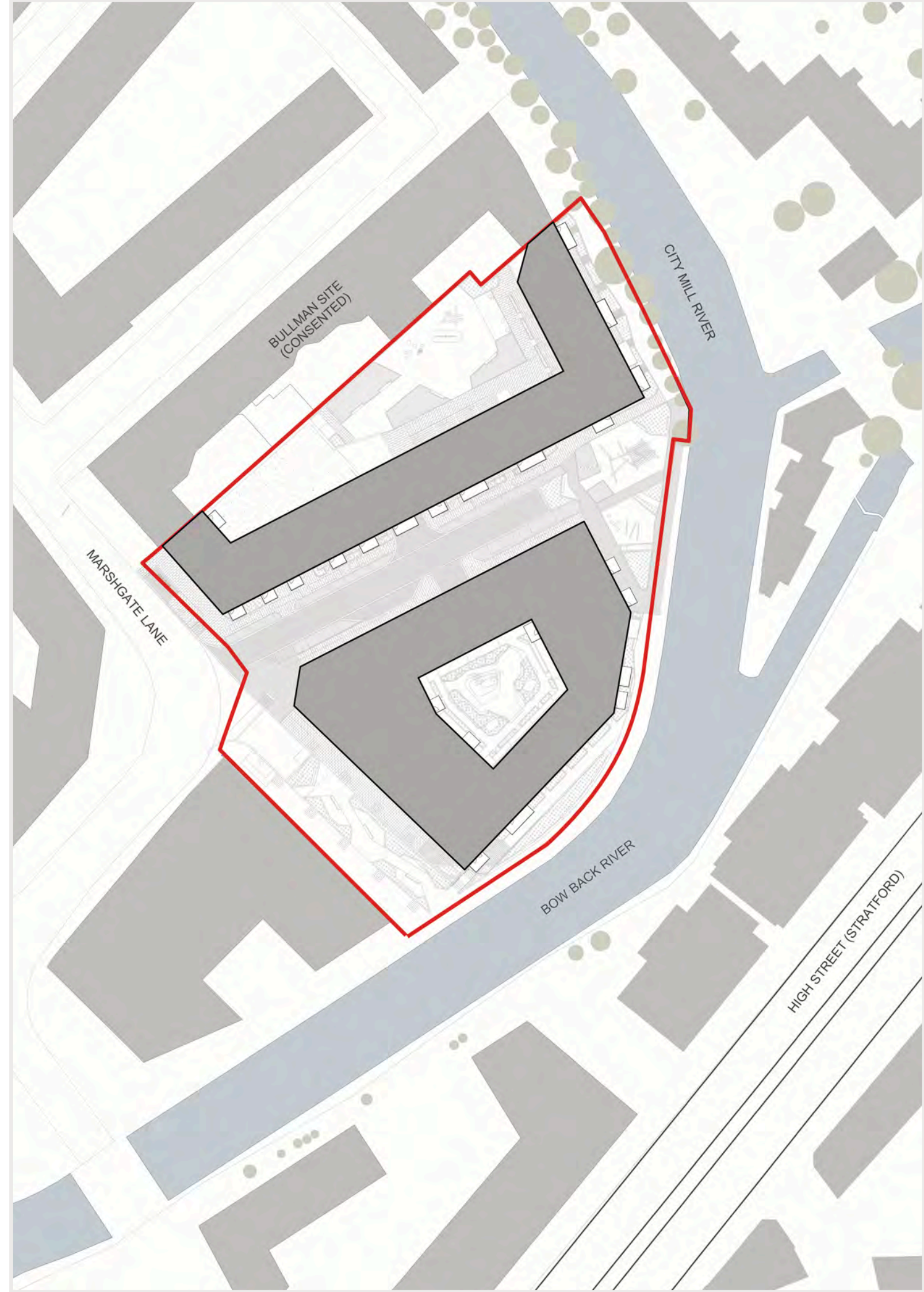


Marshgate Lane

Street address	Marshgate Lane, Pudding Mill, E15	
Borough	Newham	
Typology	Residential-led mixed use	
Status	On site	
Applicant	Anthology Lifestory	
Architect	Hawkins\Brown	
Landscape architect	Fabrik	
Application type	Full	
Review date and type	16 September 2021	formal
	22 November 2021	chair's

Site plan © Hawkins\Brown

LLDC QRP Appraisal





Marshgate Lane was selected as a good example of a scheme that demonstrates:

- how the Quality Review Panel provided evidence to support an appeal process;
- how an applicant team can respond to a clear set of design parameters to inform a brief shaped by a preceding planning process;
- how the team reevaluated its design approach to a site where a previous scheme had been refused on design grounds and an appeal upheld.

In April 2022 the LLDC granted approval for a residential-led mixed-use development on the site of the former Marshgate Business Centre in Marshgate Lane. The pre-application period for the scheme was relatively short, and there were only two reviews of the scheme, over a period of five weeks. However, all parties involved breathed a collective sigh of relief when the scheme was approved. There had been a long and challenging journey between an initial consent for development on the site, granted in May 2017, through to December 2020 when the LLDC refused a subsequent proposal, which was upheld at appeal, before new proposals finally received consent. This case study looks at the role that the Quality Review Panel played in the refusal of the earlier scheme, and how it constructively supported the final positive outcome.

Aerial view © Hawkins\Brown

High aspirations for a new neighbourhood

The Marshgate Business Centre site, Marshgate Lane, is part of a two phase development known as Anthology Stratford Mill. This was one of the first schemes to come forward in the Pudding Mill area, and was in a highly visible location, on the inside of a bend of the Bow Back River. The LLDC was keen to secure a high standard of design that would set a benchmark for future development in the area, and the panel played a critical role in achieving this.

The Pudding Mill Supplementary Planning Document (SPD)²⁷ set out a vision for a distinctive, new mixed-use neighbourhood that would be easily distinguished from the bustling area of Stratford High Street on the opposite side of the Bow Back River. Those aspirations were also integral to the LLDC Local Plan, which set the prevailing height for the area at 21 metres above ground: any buildings above this prevailing height would need to exhibit the exceptionally high design standards required by Policy BN.10 'Proposals for tall buildings' (which became Policy BN.5 in the 2020 LLDC Local Plan).

In addition to height, the character and quality of development was important for this new neighbourhood. A balance was needed between optimising the number of homes delivered and providing a high standard of accommodation.

The redesign of a consented scheme

Anthology Stratford Mill was a two phase development, granted consent in May 2017 for a residential-led mixed-use development of 254 homes and 4,257 square metres of commercial floorspace.

The Marshgate Business Centre site was the second phase of this development. In the original approval it included 130 homes, of which 34 were affordable, with buildings ranging in height from three to 12 storeys. The developer subsequently appointed Hawkins\Brown to redesign this phase, which resulted in a higher-density scheme up to 18 storeys in height, and more than twice the number of homes: 342 homes, including 198 affordable homes. The new proposal was submitted to the LLDC in 2019.

Grounds for refusal

"The Pudding Mill Lane SPD was generally clear and what the design team proposed bore no resemblance to its main principles."

Amanda Reynolds, appeal witness, AR Urbanism

Despite the increase in the number of affordable homes, the Quality Review Panel opposed the proposed heights. It felt that they would set a precedent for excessively tall buildings in this new neighbourhood and would encourage further departures from planning policy. It suggested that building heights of six to eight storeys would be more appropriate in this location.

In the panel's view the proposal was not of the exceptional design quality required by Policy BN.10 and it was therefore unable to support its approval. What's more, the scheme departed markedly from the principles underlying the consented scheme and also from the identity and character of the new neighbourhood defined in the Pudding Mill SPD.

The panel felt the density of the proposals would be excessive, undermining the humane, liveable character that Pudding Mill should have. The scale, massing, plan and layout compromised the quality of both the homes and the public realm, and did not sit comfortably within the surrounding context, including the adjoining first phase of development. In particular, the positioning of the three towers had an adverse impact on the street pattern and blocked views into and through the development. The scheme also severed connections to the waterside, and weakened the public spaces and their relationship with the wider environment.

"The Marshgate Lane sites, and Pudding Mill in general, had to feel like you were going into a real neighbourhood rather than an extension of Stratford High Street. That is why we were objecting to that height as it allowed some of the character of Stratford High Street to start to creep across the Bow Back River."

Peter Studdert, chair, Quality Review Panel

The 342 home scheme was refused by the LLDC Planning Decisions Committee and the refusal was upheld at appeal.

"The appeal inspector gave a lot of weight to the Quality Review Panel's views in the refusal, which was great to see. The panel played an important part in getting a scheme of a better scale, although it is still incredibly dense."

Peter Studdert, chair, Quality Review Panel

A baseline for renewed negotiations

Sixteen months later, in April 2022, the LLDC Planning Decisions Committee approved a new residential-led, mixed-use development for the site comprising 245 new homes, including 35 percent affordable (measured by habitable rooms). Its height ranged from 2 to 12 storeys in height. The new scheme was the same height as the 2017 original consented scheme, but included 115 additional homes.

The refused scheme had provided a useful baseline for negotiations between the new design team from Hawkins\Brown and the LLDC planning officers. When the design team presented its proposal to the Quality Review Panel, it was very clear that it had read and responded to the comments that the panel had made on the refused scheme.

“We went through the process of scrutinising the Quality Review Panel’s feedback and addressing their concerns.”

Helen Allsopp, architect, Hawkins\Brown

The new scheme successfully addressed many of the panel’s concerns in relation to the refused scheme. The tallest building had been reduced from 18 to 12 storeys in height, and was located on a prominent corner of the site. The total number of blocks had been reduced, from six to five, and each was given its own distinct character and materiality. These were arranged as courtyard blocks. This helped to align the proposal with the SPD’s aspirations to create a fine-grained development that responded to the heritage of the nearby areas. The massing was lowered on the south side, and pulled back from the boundary, to create a more human scale along a widened towpath. Daylight and sunlight analysis was undertaken across the site, demonstrating that the amenity space, particularly play space, would not be overshadowed. Designs for the landscape and public realm were also welcomed by the panel. These created a number of different character areas, with more riverine-type planting.

“The revised design, following the appeal, successfully responded to the site’s context and the evolving development landscape, marking a clear contrast to the previous proposals, which had failed to do so.”

Anne Ogundiya, Head of Planning and Transformation, LLDC

“The public realm responded to the contextually sensitive river frontage and was treated as you would a street.”

Frances Madders, Design Principal, LLDC

Residential courtyard © Hawkins\Brown





Wider positive benefits from the appeal

"Marshgate Lane is a good example of where the Quality Review Panel gave support to officers to try to hold the line. The guideline for height was 21 metres so going to 12 storeys, as the corner building does in the approved scheme, is generous anyway. At least the remainder is a better scale."

Peter Studdert, chair, Quality Review Panel

The upheld appeal was incredibly important for the LLDC as a planning authority. It set a benchmark for subsequent development in the Pudding Mill area and also established the LLDC planning officers' and the Quality Review Panel's authority in the review of high-density schemes throughout the LLDC area.

"The Marshgate Lane appeal centred largely on achieving high-quality design. The new Policy BN.5 'Proposals for tall buildings' holistically addressed key considerations, such as appropriate height placement, scale, massing, and public realm integration, streamlining the evaluation of design excellence."

Anne Ogundiya, Head of Planning and Transformation, LLDC

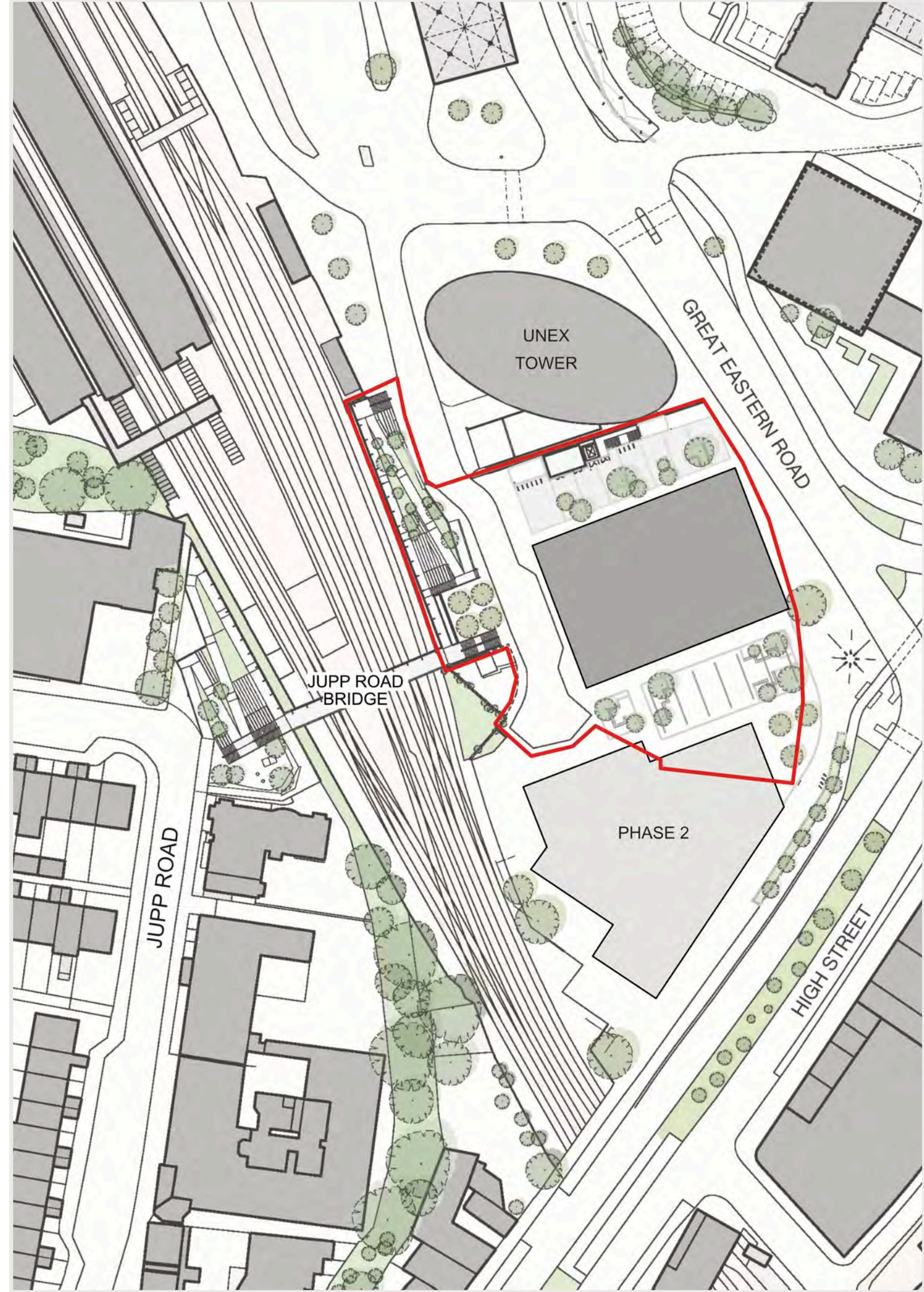
The appeal also led to the LLDC commissioning a density study to guide the approach to be taken to development in each of the LLDC's four Sub Areas.

Public realm adjacent to the Bow Back River © Hawkins\Brown

Jubilee House

Street address	Farthingale Walk, Stratford, E15	
Borough	Newham	
Typology	Sixth form college; Purpose-built student accommodation; Approval for new Jupp Road bridge	
Status	Onsite	
Applicant	Spiritbond	
Architect	AHMM	
Landscape architect	LDA Design	
Application type	Full	
Review date and type	24 February 2021	formal
	27 May 2021	formal
	6 July 2021	formal
	22 November 2021	chair's

Masterplan (with Jubilee House shown at the centre of the plan) © AHMM and LDA Design





Jubilee House was selected as a great example of a scheme that demonstrates how LLDC's Local Plan Policy BN.5:

- requires any tall building above the prevailing height of an area to exhibit exceptionally good design;
- can positively contribute to the public realm, particularly, the Quality Review Panel's suggestion that improvement to the connectivity between the Carpenters Estate and Stratford Metropolitan Centre should be secured in a Section 106 agreement.

The approved scheme for Jubilee House is for a tall building, 32 storeys in height, which will accommodate the London Academy of Excellence, a sixth form college, on its lower six floors and purpose built student accommodation rooms above. The new building replaces a 12 storey office block. This case study demonstrates how the Quality Review Panel used the LLDC's Local Plan Policy BN.5 'Proposals for tall buildings' to secure significant improvements to the public realm, for the benefit of the students who will occupy the building and for the wider local community. This was a key factor in justifying the approval of a building that was above the generally expected height of the area.

Jubilee House © AHMM

An ambitious brief for a challenging site

“If Policy BN.5 was not there, it would have been more difficult to lever public benefit.”

Peter Studdert, chair, Quality Review Panel

The proposals for Jubilee House were well above the 30 metre prevailing height established for Sub Area 3 in the LLDC's Local Plan. As land values continued to rise and viability became increasingly challenging for developers, Policy BN.5 provided the panel with an effective tool to help secure high-quality design. In particular, it supported enhancements to the public realm beyond the red line boundary of the site.

Jubilee House is located in the St John's Conservation Area and Stratford town centre, and the design team were set an ambitious brief for a challenging site. The building footprint occupied much of the land, and Great Eastern Road and Broadway, to the northeast of the site, are hostile roads with heavy traffic. The brief was to provide teaching and welfare facilities for 750 students plus 716 student accommodation rooms. The resulting high density of development meant that the scheme would be heavily reliant on its surroundings to provide high-quality public realm.

The panel was able to use Policy BN.5 to elicit improvements to the proposals. It encouraged the design team to look beyond the site's red line boundary to ensure that the development would make a positive contribution to the public realm and connectivity of the surrounding area.

Tall buildings must make a contribution to the public realm

In November 2016, the panel had reviewed an earlier proposal for the site for a 36 storey tower providing student accommodation. At that time, the panel encouraged the design team to take a broader approach to the site's development, to make a positive contribution to Stratford town centre and the public realm:

“...supporting in principle the proposed form and massing, the panel notes the difficulty in assessing the proposal for Jubilee House separately from potential redevelopment of the adjacent site. It therefore recommends a broader approach that would see development of a masterplan incorporating both sites. While both the architectural expression and public realm / landscape design strategy are at an early stage, the panel makes some comments, including on the importance of creating an impressive ground floor and exciting public realm...”

Excerpt from Quality Review Panel report, 23 November 2016

In 2021, the applicant returned to the panel with a revised proposal, by a different design team. The applicant had responded to the panel's comments and engaged with the London Academy of Excellence who occupied Broadway House on the neighbouring site. However, there were two key aspects that the panel identified as needing further work to meet the exceptional design required for a tall building to meet Policy BN.5. First, it highlighted the need for improvements to connectivity and the public realm at ground level. Second, it asked for refinements to the scale and massing of the building, so that the proposals would sit comfortably within the character of its surroundings and contribute positively to townscape views.

Engagement with stakeholders is key

The panel acknowledged the amount of work that had been undertaken since 2016 and particularly welcomed the inclusion of the London Academy of Excellence, allowing it to remain in the area. It felt that the scheme had potential to add vitality to Stratford town centre, but that further work was needed to secure improvements to the surrounding public realm, given the higher number of students to be accommodated in the building.

The revised brief for the site was very ambitious, with proposals for a 32 storey tower with 6 storeys of accommodation for the college and 716 purpose-built student rooms. The first review of the new proposals, in February 2021, was in the midst of the pandemic and the panel emphasised the need to provide adequate external amenity to support the health and wellbeing of the students.

The building footprint occupied much of the site and there was a reliance on surrounding sites for public realm. The panel encouraged ongoing engagement with the London Borough of Newham, in regard to the neighbouring Bridge House and Broadway House sites in its ownership. Engagement was also encouraged with other stakeholders. This included Transport for London, who owned Station Street to the west of the site, leading to the Jupp Road bridge.

Jubilee House © AHMM

LLDC QRP Appraisal



An extended red line boundary

Once again, the design team took the panel's comments onboard, extending the red line boundary of the site. However, the panel continued to push for an even greater contribution to the public realm, in order to justify the bulk and density of the proposal and to ensure a high quality of life for the proposed 1,466 students who would be studying and living in the building.

The panel felt that the public realm proposed was more a thoroughfare than high-quality amenity in terms of use, comfort and accessibility. Farthingale Walk, to the south, was a pedestrian and cycle route and the area of public realm to the northwest incorporated the ramp and stairs to the Jupp Road bridge. Movement through the site and connectivity beyond the red line was needed, to tie into the wider public realm, including Stratford High Street.



A new bridge and western ramp

The panel suggested creating a new or improved fully accessible pedestrian and cycle bridge, to replace the existing uninviting Jupp Road bridge. This would make a significant contribution to the public realm, and its facilitation by this development would add to the justification for a tall building in this location.

With the planned regeneration of Carpenters Estate, the bridge was likely to become a very busy route, providing the main connection between the estate and Stratford town centre. Improvements to Jupp Road bridge would be a significant benefit to the local community, as well as providing improved access for students living in the scheme to Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park.

By the third review the design team had engaged with the London Borough of Newham to collaborate on design work for a western access ramp and widening of the Jupp Road bridge. The panel supported officers' use of a Section 106 agreement, requiring the applicant to prepare a planning application for the western ramp and bridge crossing, as part of the planning permissions for Jubilee House. As a result of the panel's request for the inclusion of precise timescales and a delivery plan, a planning application was approved in 2023 for a new bridge and western ramp.

"The Quality Review Panel's role was to put down strong markers that all involved had to agree to for officers to wrap up in a Section 106 agreement."

Peter Studdert, Chair, Quality Review Panel

The new bridge, which is likely to be delivered by the London Borough of Newham, will provide a safe and inclusive link between the Carpenters Estate and Stratford town centre. In addition, the eastern bridge access ramp and seating area adjoining the existing Jupp Road bridge, to be delivered as part of Phase 1 of Jubilee House, was further refined and the boundary red line extended to encompass part of Station Street.

"Policy BN.5 requires developments to make a positive contribution to the public realm and that means we have to put people first. The Quality Review Panel pushed us to keep extending the red line boundary, which allowed us to change that area from an illegible route to a great piece of public realm, including on the way play."

Stephanie Leung, landscape architect, LDA Design

Jupp Road bridge approach, LDA Design © Rock Hunter

A new Southern Plaza

The design team had also reached an agreement with Newham to further extend the red line boundary to the south of the site, to include the partial demolition of Broadway House. This allowed space for a new Southern Plaza, including Farthingale Walk, to be delivered as part of Phase 2 of Jubilee House.

"Over time, as required by the planning authority, the project evolved to include masterplanning efforts that introduced a sixth form college, student accommodation, the Jupp Road bridge, and broader public realm enhancements; elements that were not originally envisioned in 2016. The result is a development that aligns with LLDC policy objectives and represents something that the developer can be genuinely proud of."

Anne Ogundiya, Head of Planning and Transformation, LLDC

The panel suggested that the early and high-quality delivery of the Southern Plaza be secured through a Section 106 agreement, including timescales and commitments to design quality. The inclusion of the Southern Plaza within the red line boundary significantly increases the area of public realm delivered as part of the planning application and improves connectivity with Stratford High Street.

"There is growing comprehension that public benefit is a key component in securing applications with the wider community and stakeholders. A panel of architects, landscape architects will also be pushing that along. There is a good focus in many other London boroughs, but I think the LLDC lead the way at strongly encouraging developers to bring forward significant and appropriate public benefit.

Our aspiration was always for a high-quality design. What the review process did was enable us to illustrate to clients the benefits of high-quality design to enable them to get better and more integrated planning permissions that answer not only their needs, but the needs of the communities within which they are developing."

Marc Williams, architect, AHMM

A new Southern Plaza improves connectivity with Stratford High Street © AHMM

An independent assessment of design quality

At a fourth review meeting, the Quality Review Panel gave its support for the proposals stating that it felt that the public realm improvements were of sufficient quality to make an exception for the additional height requested and to meet the requirements of Policy BN.5.

"The Planning Decisions Committee's adherence to the panel's endorsement of proposals aligned with Policy BN.5 is invaluable in safeguarding design quality. The necessity for Policy BN.5 approval was unmistakably defined, sharpening the focus of the panel, LLDC officers, and the applicant alike. Clear, transparent decision-making is essential, and in this instance, achieving exceptional design quality requires a rigorous adherence to all established criteria."

Anne Ogundiya, Head of Planning and Transformation, LLDC



04. The impact of the Quality Review Panel

“When you get a really good Quality Review Panel they can support the scheme beyond measure.”

David Bickle, architect, Hawkins\Brown

The case studies in this report demonstrate how the LLDC Quality Review Panel has contributed positively to the growth and development of the area in and around Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park. Over the twelve years of its operation, the panel has helped to fulfil the legacy of the 2012 Games: to provide a dynamic new heart for East London, creating opportunities for local people and driving innovation and growth.

A supportive relationship between officers, planning committee members and panel members is crucial to an effective planning process. This can result in far reaching benefits for the local community and beyond, through the delivery of high-quality design. The report shows that the Quality Review Panel was effective in supporting the LLDC to deliver its ambitions.

There are a number of key lessons that can be taken from the experience of the Quality Review Panel that explain this success, and which could be applied in other places undergoing significant growth and change.

Aerial view of Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park in 2024 © Jason Hawkes



1. Setting a benchmark for design quality from the outset

The main purpose of the LLDC Quality Review Panel was to ensure that high-quality development of lasting social value was achieved in and around Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park after the 2012 Games. The panel, as an independent, expert voice, was instrumental in supporting the LLDC to ensure that high-quality design was established from the very outset. LLDC officers noted that the panel helped them to 'hold the line' in the early days of the planning authority.

Fish Island Village, for example, set the standard for later developments in Fish Island as well as for other large masterplans. Similarly, the upheld appeal for Marshgate Business Centre, Marshgate Lane, was crucial to establishing an acceptable scale and density for development in the Pudding Mill area. It also contributed to LLDC's commissioning of a density study, to guide developers as to the acceptable density of development for each of its four Sub Areas. The panel's contribution to the exemplar design of Here East has resulted in the development being used as a reference for schemes throughout London. The successful regeneration of the former press and broadcast centre into a highly successful technology and media hub is an early highlight of the 2012 Games legacy.

2. A multi-disciplinary panel for a broader perspective

The panel's impact extends beyond the purely aesthetic. Panel membership included a wide range of expertise, including architects, landscape architects, sustainability experts, engineers, urban designers and access and inclusive design specialists. It provided design teams with holistic comments on the schemes it reviewed. This was instrumental in helping them to achieve high-quality spaces and a sense of place that extended beyond a site's red line boundary.

Here East is a good example of how the panel provided an independent view on the key issue of strategic walking and cycling routes, particularly the principle of a new east-west route. The panel supported and challenged the design team in its exploration of alternative design solutions. This ensured LLDC officers had confidence that a positive alternative solution, to that required by the Olympic masterplan, would be provided.

Jubilee House shows how the panel was able to help the LLDC secure improvements to the wider public realm. In this case study, the application for a tall building included improvements to a pedestrian and cycle bridge, and a new pocket of public space on Stratford High Street. These will provide long-term benefits for the students who will live and work in the building, and the wider community.



Former John Broadwood & Sons piano factory, Henley Halebrown © Rory Gaylor

3. An experienced and diverse panel membership

The success of the panel was dependent on its diverse membership, which provided a range of personal and professional viewpoints. The panel membership was adjusted annually, to bring in fresh perspectives and adjust the mix of skills. However, the knowledge of long-standing panel members was also recognised, in an area undergoing intensive regeneration with many developments approved, or in the planning system, but not yet built. Peter Studdert provided important continuity in his nine year term as chair of the panel, from its set-up in 2012 until November 2021.

Each time the panel membership was refreshed, the aim was to ensure that there was a balance of accumulated knowledge, fresh ideas and diverse perspectives. The panel also evolved over time to improve its gender balance, to better reflect the diversity of the LLDC area, and to strengthen its sustainability expertise in response to the climate emergency.

4. Supporting the LLDC officers' use of agreements and conditions

LLDC officers' use of conditions and obligations in Section 106 legal agreements was actively supported by the panel. This helped to ensure that the quality of design presented by applicants would actually be delivered. This included LLDC's innovative design monitoring planning obligations, as well as requirements for design competitions pursuant to outline planning permissions. The panel supported officers' use of planning conditions to provide necessary assurance on design details and the use of high-quality materials. This was also useful for the design teams, to help prevent later value engineering of their design work.

For example, at Fish Island Village, the panel supported officers' use of a Section 106 agreement to secure architectural competitions for two key buildings. The panel also suggested that the LLDC officers should be included in the process of selecting the winning design team and that the Quality Review Panel should have an opportunity to help the Peabody Trust to shape the competition brief.

For Stratford Waterfront, the panel suggested that the design code and parameter plans should be independently tested, to ensure that the aspirations of the outline approval would be achieved at reserved matters stage. The impact of the panel is clearly evident if you visit the East Bank cultural and education quarter. UAL's London College of Fashion is open, with the waterfront buzzing with activity. The first performances at Sadler's Wells East took place in February 2025, the V&A East Museum is planned to open in 2026 and the BBC Music Studios in 2026/27.



Stratford Waterfront © Alex Savine

5. Embedding the Quality Review Panel in the planning process

The impact of the Quality Review Panel was underpinned by the fact that its role was embedded in the LLDC's planning process. The independence of the panel was important, but the strong relationships, established from the outset, between the panel members, LLDC officers and the Planning Decision Committee members, were crucial to the panel's success.

"The panel's independence was a key element, but what truly made it effective was the strong, collaborative relationships formed early on between the panel members, our planning officers, and the Planning Decisions Committee. This ensured that the panel's feedback was not just an external critique but an integral part of our decision-making process. By engaging the panel at early stages of design and maintaining open communication, we were able to secure high-quality developments across projects of all scales, from transformative masterplans like Fish Island Village to impactful individual buildings like Jubilee House. The process demonstrated the value of aligning expertise with planning objectives to enhance the built environment effectively."

Anne Ogundiya, Head of Planning and Transformation, LLDC

The reciprocity that developed between the panel and LLDC officers played a key role in securing high-quality development. Officers ensured that schemes were usually brought to the panel at an early stage of their design evolution and they were very clear in their briefings on relevant policy and on aspects of the scheme that would benefit from the panel's input. Officers also brought schemes of all scales forward for review, from large masterplans, to individual buildings.

Regular meetings between LLDC officers and panel members afforded officers an opportunity to keep panel members up to date on changes in policy and it gave the panel members an opportunity to ask questions.

The panel also had the full support of the Planning Decisions Committee from the beginning and this relationship strengthened over time. The chair of the panel was invited to give regular updates to committee members on the panel's work and emerging themes and, in turn, the committee could update the chair on its priorities and concerns.

6. Effective panel management

Ensuring the impartiality of the panel was important, because LLDC was both the landowner, promoting development, and the local planning authority. An independent panel manager, Frame Projects, was appointed to establish the panel on behalf of the development corporation. Their task was to facilitate advice from an independent expert panel, as part of LLDC's design and planning processes.

Defining the panel's governance was a collaborative process. Terms of reference were drafted with input from LLDC's design, planning and legal teams. This provided clarity to panel members on managing conflicts of interest and confidentiality, as well as clearly describing the role and remit of the panel.

Frame Projects was also responsible for ensuring that the panel was well briefed on LLDC planning policy, at induction meetings for new members, annual meetings, and at each review of a development proposal.

Reports of review meetings, signed off by the chair, provided a clear and reliable record of the panel's advice and recommendations. These reports were issued within ten working days, to ensure that LLDC officers and applicants received the feedback promptly for use in ongoing pre-application meetings.

"The reports of review meetings were incredibly important. This was demonstrated in the Marshgate Lane appeal, where the LLDC's barrister found the clear and concise reports very helpful in preparing the presentation for the case."

Peter Studdert, chair, Quality Review Panel

Regular progress meetings between Frame Projects and LLDC planning and design teams kept the membership and operation of the panel under review. This helped to ensure the panel could act as a critical friend to the LLDC, helping achieve its design quality ambitions, through independent expert advice.

7. Grounded in policy and design management process

The LLDC's various policies and design management processes supported the work of the panel, particularly its influential approaches to tall buildings, biodiversity and inclusive design. The LLDC's planning policy also evolved in direct and immediate response to lessons learned from the schemes that were reviewed, thereby continually raising the standard of development.

The LLDC's first Local Plan, adopted in 2015, included Policy BN.10 'Proposals for tall buildings'. This drew on the experience of negotiating appropriate scale, with support from the panel, for early schemes including Fish Island Village. The revision to Policy BN.10 in the 2020 revised Local Plan saw it renamed as Policy BN.5 'Proposals for tall buildings'.

In addition to Policy BN.5 reiterating the need for the Quality Review Panel's endorsement for all proposals for tall buildings, it also reflected the requirements of the Local Plan for outline applications for tall buildings to be treated by exception, given that they are likely to depend on their detailed design to be able to demonstrate overall acceptability.

And the panel's involvement in Stratford Waterfront established an expectation that any outline application for a tall building had to be accompanied by a sufficiently detailed design code, coordinated with parameter plans, as well as a Section 106 obligation to secure and retain an appropriately skilled design team as part of any planning permission.

"Planning Committee have always placed great weight on the Quality Review Panel's advice and conclusions. As a result, their advice is a powerful tool for officers, supporting them in their negotiations to make scheme improvements."

Frances Madders, Design Principal, LLDC



Sugar House Island © Frame Projects



8. Design review is a collaborative process

The Quality Review Panel did not operate in isolation. Its success in the planning process was underpinned by the LLDC officers and the LLDC Planning Decisions Committee, which gave clear and consistent weight to the panel's comments. The case studies show how effective design review is borne out of collaboration between the Quality Review Panel, LLDC officers, the design team and the applicant. When all parties are aligned to achieve high-quality design, the review process can be an uplifting and positive experience for all involved.

Here East is a great example of a scheme that has exceeded everyone's expectations. The infectious enthusiasm of the client and design team is still evident twelve years on. Here East's success could not have been achieved had it not been for the combination of a receptive applicant, a new planning authority eager to establish high standards for design quality, and a newly established, but highly experienced, Quality Review Panel.

"Review is not a crit like at university, but a creative dialogue between people who know what they are talking about in order to find the best solution for a given site."

Peter Studdert, chair, Quality Review Panel

The masterplan architect for Stratford Waterfront recalls carefully working through the revised masterplan with the Quality Review Panel. A lot of time was spent discussing the sequence of the buildings, including the order of the cultural and education buildings and how they would activate Stratford Waterfront. The location of the residential buildings and how they would be combined with the cultural and education buildings was also considered, to provide a single quarter while also ensuring that residents would be afforded adequate privacy. Access into and movement through the site was also an important consideration. The panel's suggestion that the design code and parameter plans be independently tested gave all parties comfort that the control documents were robust enough to ensure that a high-quality development would be delivered, while also being flexible enough to enable LLDC to procure a development partner.

Stratford Waterfront public realm, LDA Design © Morley von Sternberg

The design team for Lanterna, Fish Island Village, welcomed the fresh perspective of other designers' viewpoints offered by the panel. This afforded a moment to stand back and look at the broader view. It also noted that there were ideas that the panel suggested that it did not take on board, but which helped to raise its ambitions for what they could achieve.

“The panel suggested that our bin stores could become a feature element, made by local craftspeople. Although this particular idea wasn't realised, comments such as this helped to raise the ambition of the project. That the project has won multiple awards and is held as an exemplar housing scheme is testament to the collaborative nature of the review process.”

David Lyndon, architect, Lyndon Goode Architects

Great design review is based on open and honest dialogue, providing a forum to test design ideas. It offers design teams a critical friend that will simultaneously support and challenge its design. Its independent advice can help move a project forward, bringing a fresh perspective to the design process. It can add value at a range of scales, from strategic design decisions to small shifts that have a huge impact on success of a project.

For Here East, the panel suggested that the landscape had become overly complex and that a more industrial character would sit better alongside the architecture and provide more durable space. It also encouraged greater collaboration between architect and landscape architect. Not only did this pay off, to provide a great backdrop for flexible use, it also kept cost to a minimum by retaining the existing hard landscaping and introducing sections of lawn and planting to add visual interest and created natural dividers.

The design team for Jubilee House benefited from the panel's emphasis on the need for applicant engagement with the owners of neighbouring sites, to help secure adequate public realm for the benefit of the wider community to justify the additional height of the building.

Fish Island Village was a greater challenge, because the planning application was submitted as the LLDC took over planning powers and prior to any review by the Quality Review Panel. However, LLDC officers benefited from the panel's support in emphasising to the applicant and design team that the scale and massing of the masterplan needed to be reduced, to meet the aspirations outlined in Tower Hamlets' Fish Island Area Action Plan.

For the Marshgate Business Centre, Marshgate Lane, the LLDC officers benefited from the panel's support in outlining why it could not support the proposed scheme, which was later upheld at appeal. A subsequent revised scheme was successful in achieving planning consent.

Peter Studdert, in his role as chair of the LLDC Quality Review Panel, often noted that the panel had the luxury of advising purely on quality. This report shows the important role that the Quality Review Panel played in helping to mediate between all parties, to support the LLDC in delivering high-quality design.



Panel site visit © Frame Projects

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Appendices

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Appendix A

LLDC Quality Review Panel members

Panel membership included multi-disciplinary design expertise with particular relevance to the LLDC area. The panel included architects, heritage experts, landscape architects, sustainability experts, urban designers, town planners, engineers and inclusive designers. Many panel members had expertise and experience in more than one of these areas.

Chairs

Peter Studdert	chair	2012 - 2021
Hari Phillips	co-chair	2021 - 2024
Peter Bishop	co-chair	2021 - 2023
Teresa Borsuk	co-chair	2023 - 2024
Cristina Monteiro	vice-chair	2021 - 2024

Panel members

Sarah Akigbogun	2020 - 2024
Jayden Ali	2020 - 2024
Julia Barfield	2012 - 2024
June Barnes	2021 - 2023
Steven Bee	2015 - 2018
Lee Bennett	2015 - 2017
Liam Bond	2014 - 2016
David Bonnett	2014 - 2019
Teresa Borsuk	2016 - 2024
Mary Bowman	2021 - 2022
Mark Brearley	2014 - 2016
Jane Briginshaw	2017 - 2024
Catherine Burd	2012 - 2024
Kelvin Campbell	2015 - 2018
Michál Cohen	2016 - 2024
Russell Curtis	2016 - 2024
Neil Davidson	2021 - 2024
Neil Deely	2014 - 2020
Kate Digney	2017 - 2024
Jayne Earnscliffe	2017 - 2024
Alex Ely	2014 - 2015
Jennette Emery-Wallis	2018 - 2024
Dan Epstein	2014 - 2015
Amber Fahey	2020 - 2024
Fergus Feilden	2017 - 2024

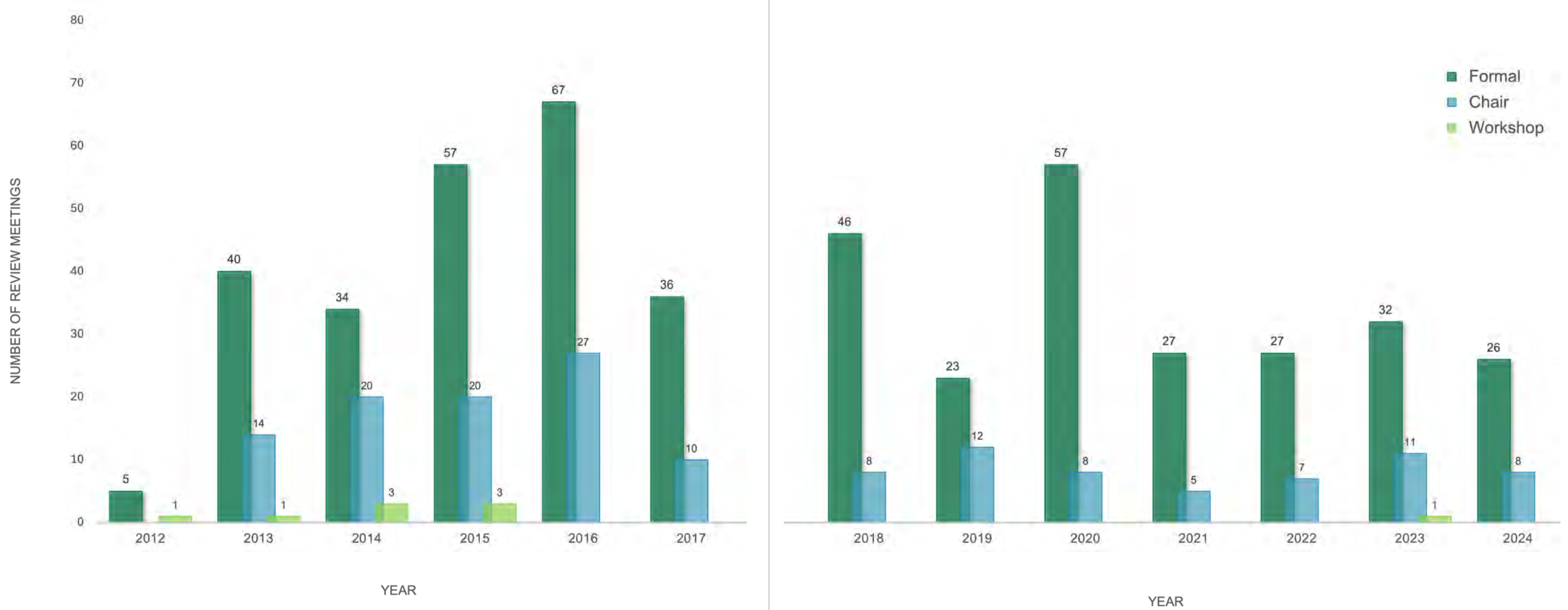
Keith French	2017 - 2024
David Gilpin	2014 - 2021
Jonathan Hagos	2020 - 2024
Andrew Harland	2014 - 2021
Rachel Haugh	2016 - 2020
Simon Henley	2017 - 2024
Tom Holbrook	2014 - 2016
Helen Hough	2020 - 2024
Shashank Jain	2020 - 2024
Angie Jim Osman	2020 - 2024
Toby Johnson	2016 - 2020
Barbara Kaucky	2018 - 2024
Adam Khan	2012 - 2024
Graham King	2015 - 2019
Lynn Kinnear	2014 - 2017
Nisha Kurian	2018 - 2024
Peter Lainson	2014 - 2016
David Lindsey	2016 - 2018
Anna Liu	2020 - 2024
Tom Lonsdale	2014 - 2018
John Lyll	2014 - 2016
Mike Martin	2016 - 2024
Ed McCann	2014 - 2024
Nathan Miller	2020 - 2024
John O'Mara	2016 - 2024
Sue Rowlands	2016 - 2021
Ann Sawyer	2019 - 2024
Peter St John	2014 - 2020
Peter Stewart	2014 - 2015
Lynne Sullivan	2014 - 2016
Lindsey Whitelaw	2014 - 2016
Sarah Wigglesworth	2019 - 2020
Johnny Winter	2016 - 2020

Appendix B

Schemes reviewed

The LLDC Quality Review Panel reviewed around 190 schemes during its 12 years of operation, between 2012 and 1 December 2024. Many of the schemes were reviewed more than once.

The chart below shows the number and type of review meetings held in each year.



Appendix C

Acknowledgements

March 2025

This report was prepared by LLDC and Frame Projects, and we would like to thank the myriad people who have contributed to the London 2012 Olympic Games and Paralympic Games legacy, including applicants, members of design teams, LLDC Quality Review Panel members, London Boroughs of Hackney, Newham, Tower Hamlets and Waltham Forest.

In particular, we would like to thank Grant McClements, Senior Planning Development Manager, and Paul Taylor, Design Principal, Development, LLDC, and the individuals who took part in the interviews that contributed to the case studies:

Quality Review Panel Chairs

Peter Studdert (2012 to 2021)
Hari Phillips (2021 to 2024)

Design team members

Helen Allsopp	Architect, Hawkins\Brown
David Bickle	Architect, Hawkins\Brown
Jake Brodetsky	The Peabody Trust (formerly)
Phil Catcheside	Architect, Hawkins\Brown
Monica Coffey	Architect, Stockwool
Stephanie Leung	Landscape architect, LDA Design
David Lyndon	Architect, Lyndon Goode Architects
Peter Maxwell	Director of Design, LLDC
Gavin Poole	Chief Executive Officer, Here East
Areta Soare	Architect, Howells
Marc Williams	Architect, Allford Hall Monaghan Morris
Alex Wraight	Architect, Allies and Morrison

Consultants

Amanda Reynolds	AR Urbanism
Sue Rowlands	Tibbalds Planning (formerly)

LLDC officers (past and present)

Allison De Marco	Head of Development Management
Esther Everett	Head of Design, Development
Eleanor Fawcett	Head of Design and Physical Regeneration
Kathryn Firth	Chief of Design
Pippa Henshall	Senior Landscape Design Manager
Anthony Hollingsworth	Director of Planning Policy and Decisions
Hannah Lambert	Senior Designer
Frances Madders	Design Principal
Richard McFerran	Development Management Team Leader
Anne Ogundiya	Head of Planning and Transformation

Frame Projects

Tessa Kordeczka	Design Panel Manager
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Appendix D

Glossary

Control documents

The design code and parameter plans.

Design code

A design code is a set of design requirements for the physical development of a site or area. It is made up of rules that are clear, specific and unambiguous, and it should include extensive graphical illustrations. The code should build upon a design vision such as a masterplan or other design and development framework for a site or area.

(ref: www.gov.uk)

Full or Detailed planning permission

An application for full planning permission results in a decision on the detailed proposals of how a site can be developed. If planning permission is granted, and subject to compliance with any planning conditions that are imposed, no further engagement with the local planning authority is required to proceed with the development granted permission, although other consents may be required.

(ref: www.gov.uk)

Hybrid planning application

A hybrid planning application seeks both full and outline planning permission for different aspects of development on the same site.

(ref: <https://www.planningportal.co.uk>)

Illustrative scheme

An illustrative scheme, or masterplan, provides an indication of how development may come forward at the reserved matters stage within the 'envelope' of the framework plan.

Masterplan or illustrative scheme

Masterplans set the vision and implementation strategy for a development. They are distinct from local design guides by focusing on site specific proposals such as the scale and layout of development, mix of uses, transport and green infrastructure. Depending on the level of detail, the masterplan may indicate the intended arrangement of buildings, streets and the public realm. More specific parameters for the site's development may be set out in a design code, which can accompany the overall masterplan.

(ref: www.gov.uk)

Outline planning permission

An application for outline planning permission allows for a decision on the general principles of how a site can be developed. Outline planning permission is granted subject to conditions requiring the subsequent approval of one or more 'reserved matters'.

(ref: www.gov.uk)

Parameter plans

Parameter plans can include information on the proposed land use, building heights, areas of potential built development, structure of landscape and green infrastructure, access and movement and other key structuring and placemaking concepts.

(ref: www.gov.uk)

Prevailing height

The LLDC Local Plan sets out the prevailing height for each Sub Area, with the aim of forming an arrangement of heights that will contribute to the area's townscape. Policy BN.5 sets out the approach that needs to be applied both in designing new development and in assessing planning applications where developers propose to exceed the stipulated height.

Red line boundary

The red line boundary highlights the area that is included in an application for planning permission.

Reserved matters

Reserved matters are those aspects of a proposed development which an applicant can choose not to submit details of with an outline planning application, ie they can be 'reserved' for later determination.

(ref: www.gov.uk)

Section 106 agreement

Where appropriate to the development proposed, improvements delivered as part of development proposals are secured through use of a Section 106 agreement.

These agreements confer planning obligations on persons with an interest in land in order to achieve the implementation of relevant planning policies as authorised by Section 106 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990.

(ref: LLDC Local plan)

Sub Area

The four Sub Areas identified within the LLDC Local Plan that make up a geographical framework for implementing strategic policy.

(ref: LLDC Local plan)

Supplementary Planning Document (SPD)

A Local Development Document that may cover a range of issues focusing on either a specific area of theme and that provides further details of policies and proposals in a 'parent' document.

(ref: LLDC Local plan)

Tall buildings

Buildings that are higher than an area's prevailing or generally expected height.

(ref: LLDC Local plan)

Typology

A form of type of development, for example mews, terraces, stacked maisonettes and mansion blocks are examples of residential typologies.

(ref: LLDC Local plan)

