



ESSEX QUALITY REVIEW PANEL

ESSEX PLANNING OFFICERS ASSOCIATION



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MEMBERS' DETAILED GUIDE

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86 - 92 (evens)
William Hunter Way
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MONTBAZON PLACE
FLATS 86-92
WILLIAM HUNTER WAY
BENTWOOD
CM14 4EN



1.0 Introduction

Introduction to the Quality Review Panel

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

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

These QRPs will ensure delivery and promotion of high-quality new developments through the creation of good design, sustainability, and improved quality, creating better places and environments to work and live in the County. A Quality Review Panel provides a well-established method of offering independent and impartial guidance on the design of new buildings, landscapes, and public space.



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

The Purpose of this Document

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

It gives practical guidance on how the process works, communications and information you will receive, including briefing documents and ground rules for the Review session.

Quality Review Panels are a well-established way of improving the quality of design outcomes in the built environment, and it is now recognised in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF, 2023), as quoted below:

“138. 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. The primary means of doing so should be through the preparation and use of local design codes, in line with the National Model Design Code. For assessing proposals there is a range of tools including workshops to engage the local community, design advice and review arrangements, and assessment frameworks such as Building for a Healthy Life. These are of most benefit if used as early as possible in the evolution of schemes, and are particularly important for significant projects such as large-scale housing and mixed-use developments. In assessing applications, local planning authorities should have regard to the outcome from these processes, including any recommendations made by design review panels.”



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

Our Principles & USP

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

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

The purpose of the QRP is to raise the quality of the built environment and not to question the principle of development. The QRP will be available to all who would wish to use it, and is expected to be of particular aid where quality and design is at the forefront of discussions at pre-app stage or earlier.

You are in our pool of Panellists which currently includes 56 members because you either live or have worked in Essex or Uttlesford.

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

You have signed up to an open and transparent review process in which all information is circulated beforehand, and all the main discussions occur with

the Panel, the Local Planning Authority (LPA), and the Applicant in the same room. This is to ensure that everyone is properly briefed and has an input into the process with all parties present. The output of the meeting is a Report which accurately records the Panel's feedback in the review.

It is also important that the Panel is independent of the LPA, and the Applicant and give commentary unencumbered by any conflicts of interest. All reviews are conducted in the context of and referring to National and Local Policy on design which should align with the principles of the National Design Guide and the Essex Design Guide . We encourage you to familiarise yourself with these documents and applicable Local Policy.

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

Quality Review Principles:

1

Independent – it is conducted by people who are unconnected with the scheme’s promoters and decision makers, and it ensures that conflicts of interest do not arise.

2

Expert - the advice is delivered by suitably trained people who are experienced in design, who know how to criticise constructively and whose standing and expertise is widely acknowledged.

3

Multidisciplinary - the advice combines the different perspectives of architects, urban designers, town planners, landscape architects, engineers and other specialist experts to provide a complete, rounded assessment.

4

Accountable- the Quality Review Panel and its advice must be clearly seen to work for the benefit of the public. This should be ingrained within the panel’s terms of reference.

5

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

6

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

7

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

8

Timely - the advice is conveyed as early as possible in the design process, because this can avoid a great deal of wasted time. It also costs less to make changes at an early stage.

9

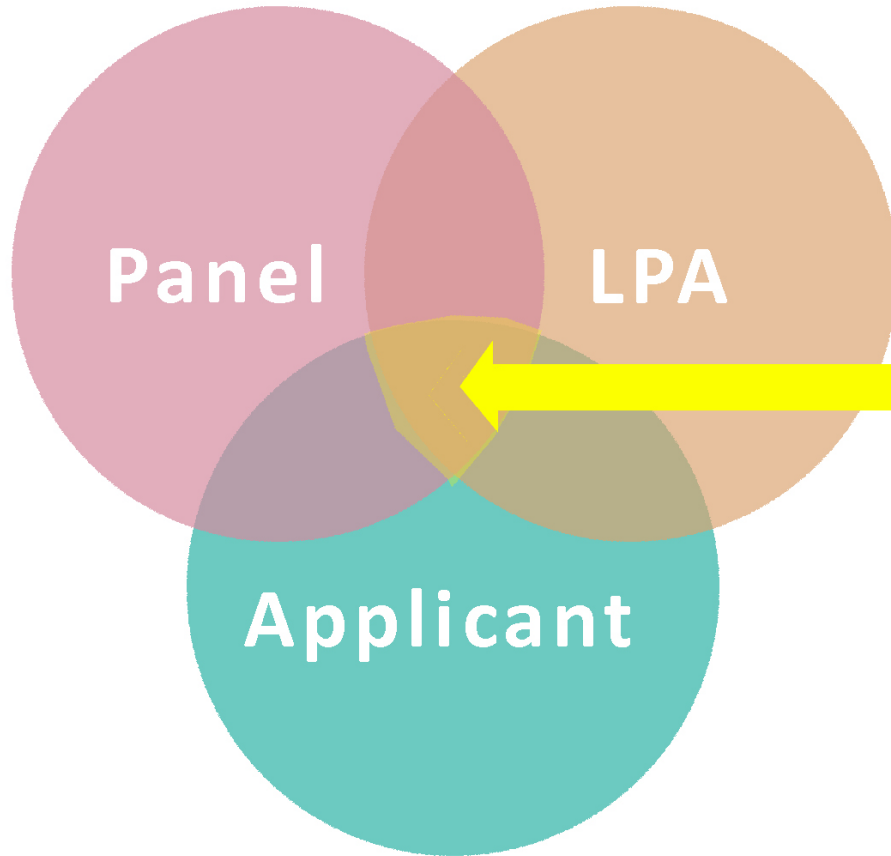
Advisory - the Quality Review Panel does not make decisions, but it offers impartial advice for the people who do.

10

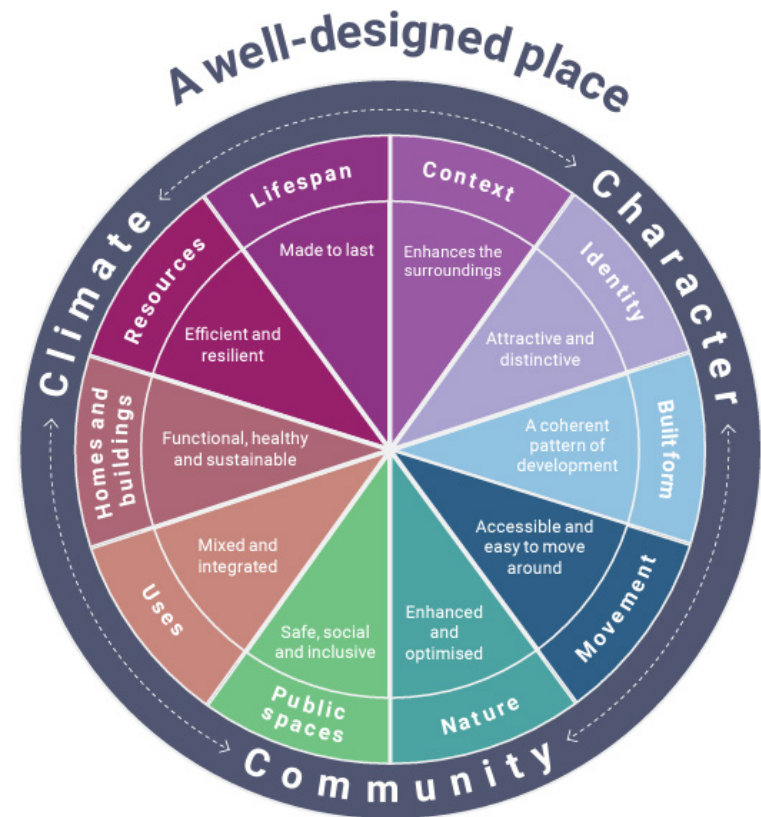
Objective – it appraises schemes according to reasoned, objective criteria rather than the stylistic tastes of individual panel members.

11

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



Meaningful Review





ESSEX QUALITY REVIEW PANEL

ESSEX PLANNING OFFICERS ASSOCIATION

The Team

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

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

Each Panel is organised and managed by Place Services on behalf of the Essex Planning Officer's Association. The Panel Manager will be working with a Panel Co-ordinator. Communications will mainly be from the Co-ordinator.

Contact Us

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

Essex Design Guide

Email: essexdesignguide@essex.gov.uk

Telephone: 0333 013 6840

Website: www.essexdesignguide.co.uk/qualitypanel



Panel Manager - Jason Yates

Email: jason.yates@essex.gov.uk

Telephone: 0333 013 7271

Mobile: 07740901097

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



Panel Manager - Sam Williams

Email: Sam.Williams@essex.gov.uk

Telephone: 0333 013 3136

Mobile: N/A

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



Panel Coordinator - Joe Feeney

Email: joseph.feeney@essex.gov.uk

Telephone: 0333 032 2838

Mobile: N/A

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



Panel Coordinator - Rosie Follett

Email: Rosie.follett@essex.gov.uk

Telephone: 0333 013 9493

Mobile: N/A

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



Panel Coordinator - Neha Patil

Email: neha.patil@essex.gov.uk

Telephone: 0333 013 9313

Mobile: N/A

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



**ESSEX QUALITY
REVIEW PANEL**
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2.0 What to Expect During a Review

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

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

The panel will be made up of the following:

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

Additionally:

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

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

Panels in most cases will require a site visit by the chair and panel members. Should this be required, a site meeting will be recommended and scheduled in during a review session.

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

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

Disciplines covered across the EQR Panel Members

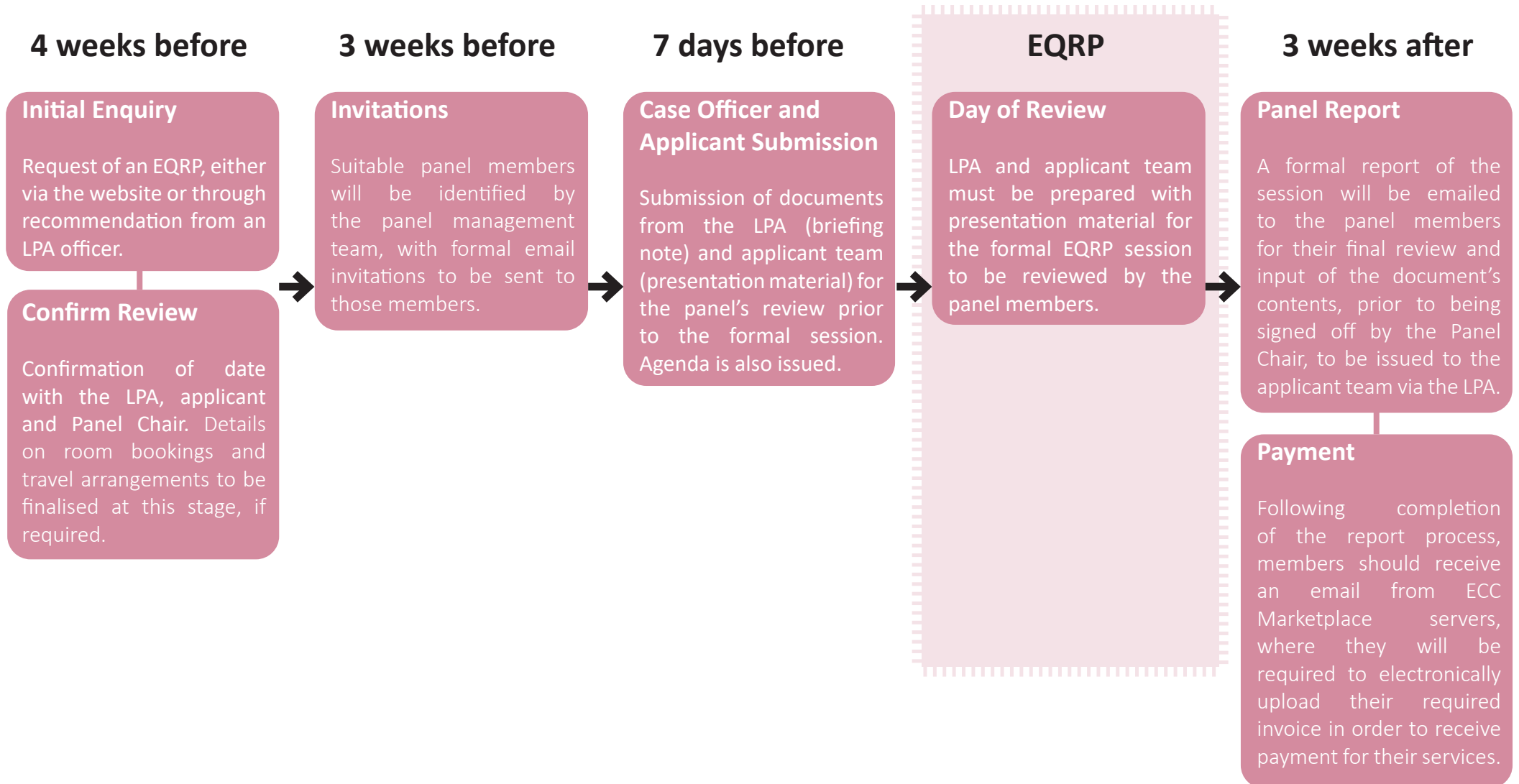
The Essex Quality Review Panel is proud of the members it is able to offer across the County. The Panel comprises of a range of professionalisms responding to the coverage the Panel is able to cover. All Panel Members and Chairs have key experience and links to Essex to ensure a panel is constructed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

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

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



3.0 The Quality Review Process



Initial Invite - Typically 3 Weeks Before the Panel Date

You will be asked to join a particular Panel based on your level of expertise related to the requirements of the project available to us at the time.

In the early stages of Panel arrangements, we will have been contacted by the Applicant or the Case Officer to arrange a review. We will have established mutual availability of the Applicant, LPA and Panel Chair. We will have scoped the likely topics required for a review and will be seeking to establish the make-up of the Panel depending on availability.

If you receive an invite, it is because your skill set aligns with the requirements of the scheme.

It is important to respond to your invite as soon as possible as, if you do not have availability, we will need to approach someone else. You will be sent an invite by email containing:

- The date and time of the Panel.
- whether it is an online, half day, or a full day review.
- The address of the site and a brief description of what is proposed.
- The area of expertise for which we are seeking advice from you.
- The deadline by which you should RSVP. This will normally be within 5 working days of date of the email.

Online reviews usually take 4 hours, half day reviews are 4.5 hours long and full day reviews run for 7.5 hours. You will receive remuneration accordingly (see later).

If you consider there may be a conflict of interest, you should raise this with the Panel Co-ordinator.

On receipt of a positive RSVP, you will receive a holding diary invite by email.

4.0 The Agenda Pack

The Agenda

If the Panel is **Online**, this will include:

- A formal emailed diary invite with joining details for, and length of, the Teams meeting.
- This will include a 15 minute Pre-meet.
- The full list of attendees from the Panel, LPA, and Applicant Team – including their areas of specialism.
- The full details and biographies of all Panel members.
- The Agenda for the session- sample agendas are included over the page.

If the Panel is **In- Person**, this will also include:

- A diary invite, including location of the venue and meeting point.
- Directions to the venue and meeting point for the session.
- Location of nearest station and whether transport to the venue can be arranged from there.
- Parking Arrangements.
- The Site Location.
- Travel Arrangements between the site and the venue.
- Details of the site visit, including, if required, a route, and instructions regarding health and safety and hi-vis clothing.
- A risk assessment covering the site visit.

Please note that the meeting point and venue may not always be the same as in many cases it makes sense to meet on site and conduct the site visit first. If you have any queries or suggestions regarding the route or any of the above, please contact the Panel management as soon as possible.



AGENDA PACK

WHAT YOU WILL RECEIVE 7 WORKING DAYS BEFORE

AGENDA

- AGENDA
- JOINING INSTRUCTIONS
- DIRECTIONS TO VENUE AND MEETING POINT
- SITE VISIT DETAILS
- SITE VISIT ROUTE
- RISK ASSESSMENT

LPA BRIEFING

- SITE DETAILS
- PLANNING POLICY CONTEXT
- PLANNING HISTORY
- APPLICANT ENGAGEMENT SUMMARY
- CONCERNS RAISED/ADDRESSED
- SCHEME PLANNING ASSESSMENT
- CONCERNS/QUESTIONS FOR THE PANEL

APPLICANT BRIEFING

- CONTEXT ANALYSIS
- CHARACTER ASSESSMENT
- RELEVANT REPORTS
- DESIGN NARRATIVE
- PLANS, SECTIONS & ELEVATIONS
- 3D VIEWS
- QUESTIONS FOR THE PANEL

THIS BRIEFING CAN BE SUPPLEMENTED BY YOUR OWN RESEARCH

Case Officer's Planning Briefing

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

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

This will include:

- The size of the site, together with the number of dwellings and/or sq.m. of other uses proposed.
- The planning policy context relevant to the scheme from national to local level, including the status of the Local Plan and whether the site is allocated.
- Relevant planning history of the site.
- A summary of any engagement with the applicant so far and any relevant concerns raised and addressed.
- An assessment of the scheme in planning terms.
- Any points or concerns with the scheme that the LPA would like addressed.



The Panel Review Session

The review session is structured to allow enough time for introductions, briefings, site visit (if in person), review and feedback. The sole output of the session is the Panel Report. This should accurately set out the Panel's review, recommendations and conclusions, and for the sake of transparency, will be based on a recording of the Panel Discussion and summary by the Panel Chair on the day. It is important to ensure that the agenda is followed to allow all parties to input into the session and to ensure that the Panel provides a strong review discussion and summary.

Joining instructions for the session vary depending on whether it is Online or In-Person. For the smooth running of a meaningful review, you will need to familiarise yourself with these and arrive in good time.

Preliminary Session - Online

You will be required to log on 15 minutes before the main meeting – this will be as per the instructions on your Teams invite.

The purpose of this session is to allow for the Panel and the LPA to discuss any issues they have with the scheme, and to clarify anything required with the Panel Management.

In-Person Site Visits

For logistical reasons, to avoid unnecessary travel, a site visit will normally occur at the start of the review session. This is a chance to experience the site and context and to ask the Applicant and LPA questions.

There will be a meeting point specified in the briefing pack, in the agenda. Please ensure you arrive in good time so that the site visit is able to run to schedule.

The Panel Manager will ensure that the Panel, the Applicant and the LPA are introduced, and that a few practical rules are set out around the visit, including health and safety, and requesting that the group remains together. This is to ensure that all are safe, and that everyone gets the most out of the interactions between Panellists, the LPA and the Applicant.

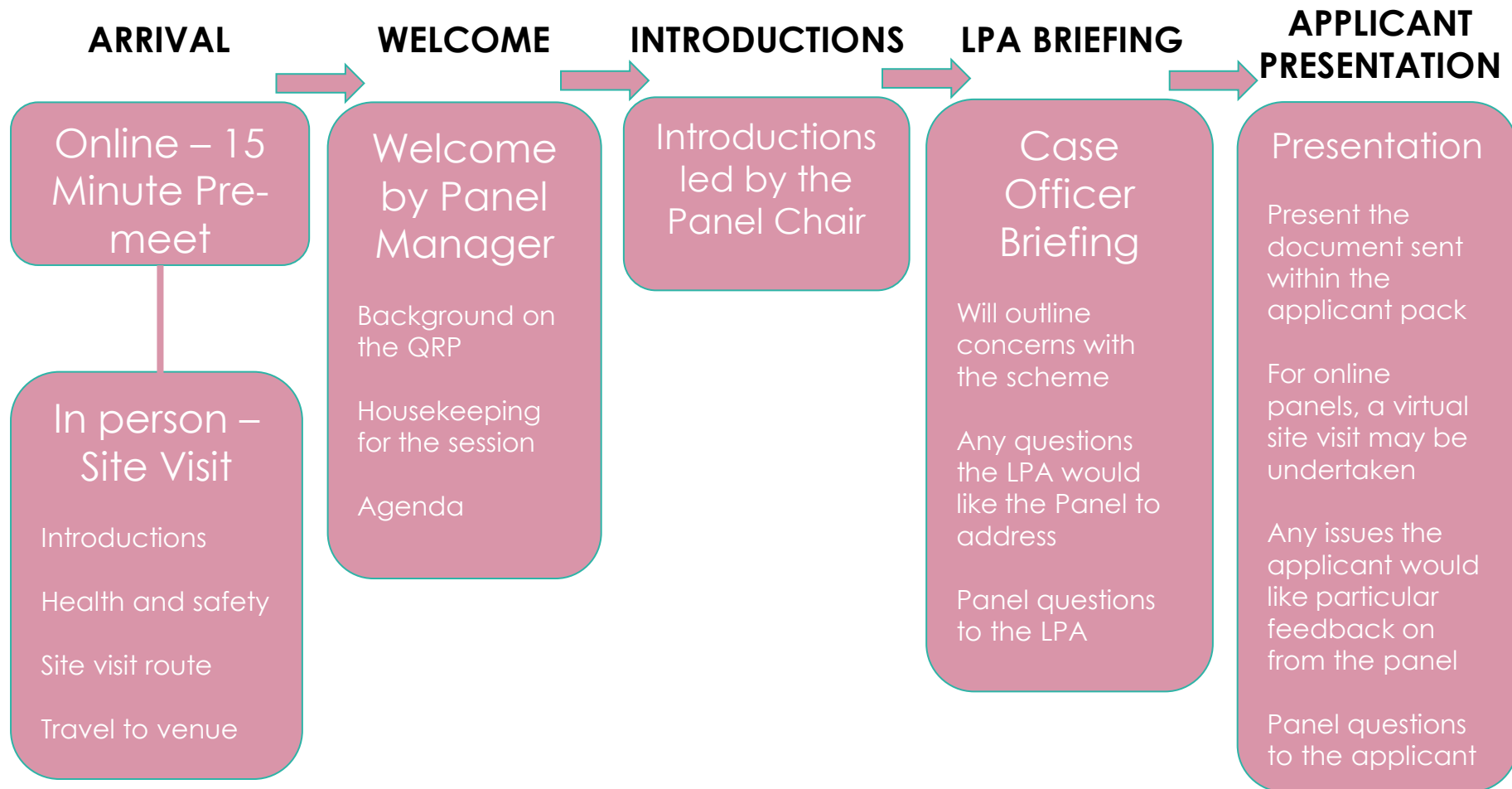
Sites may be muddy, the visit may include inspecting existing buildings, or moving through a construction site. We request that you ensure that you wear suitable footwear, and follow any site specific or health and safety instructions given.

There may be site visit a route published in the agenda pack, and unless it is agreed by the Applicant and the Panel Chair to vary this, it is important that the route is followed to ensure that the review is thorough, safe, and the site visit runs to time.

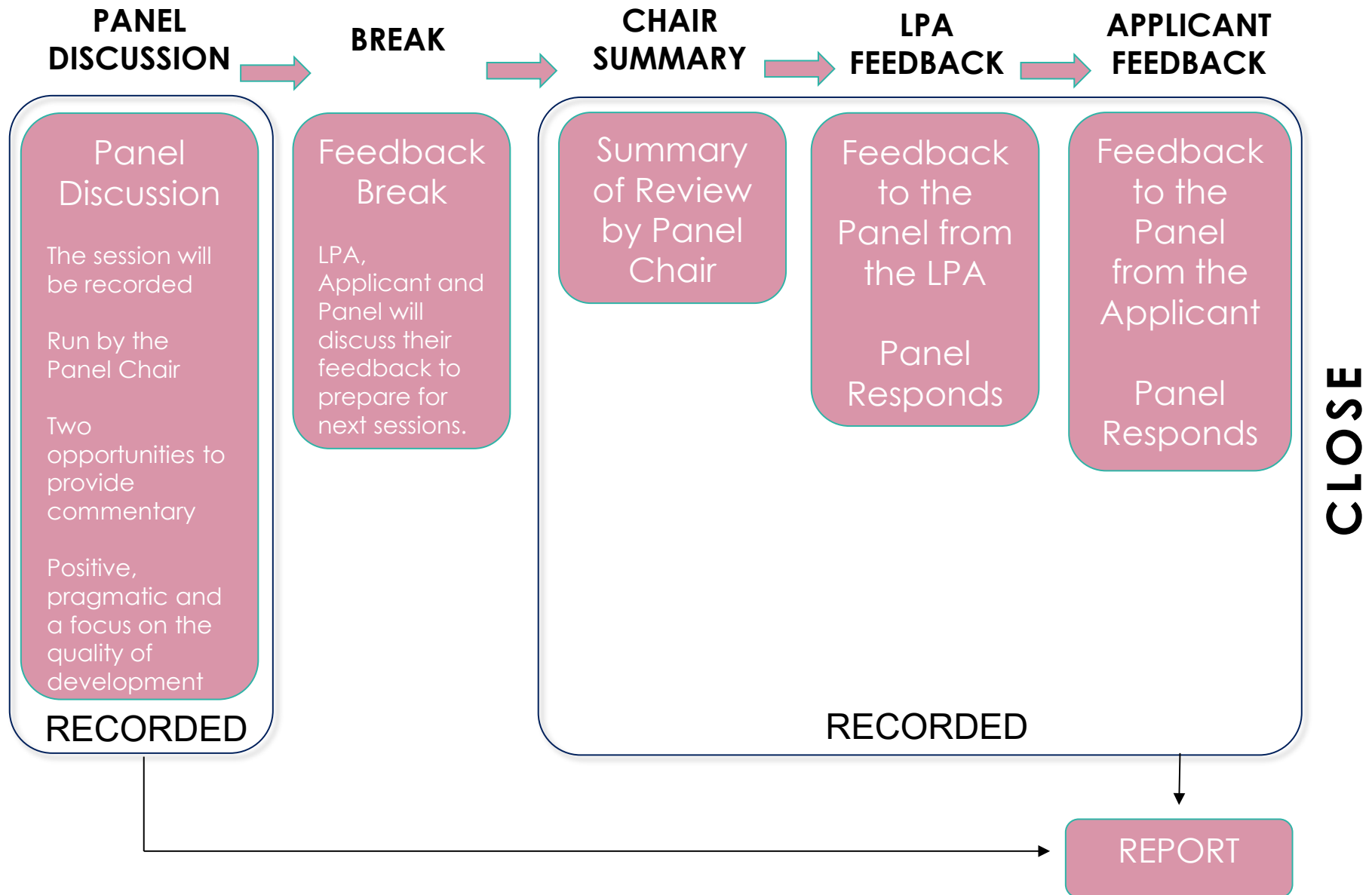
The site visit is an opportunity for Panellists to ask questions of the Applicant and the Case Officer. It is important that the whole group is able to witness these questions and the resultant discussion. Please therefore ensure that you stay with the group throughout the visit.

The Panel Management will ensure that the site visit runs to time and, if necessary, will adapt the route or encourage a faster navigation of it to achieve this. At the end of the visit, we will collect together and then travel to the venue.

ON THE DAY



ON THE DAY



Welcome and Briefing by the Panel Manager

At the venue or Online, the Panel, the LPA, the applicant, and observers will be formally welcomed to the session by the Panel Manager, who will then give some background on the QRP and run through the rules for the session.

For Online sessions, this will include:

- Microphones being muted when not required, to maintain focus on the speaker/presenter.
- Video being turned off when not presenting or talking, again to maintain focus.
- Any questions during to the meeting should be dealt with by raising your hand and should be considered by the Panel Chair after each presentation.
- Observers will be muted with their video cameras off.

The Panel Manager will the run through the Agenda and structure of the day. The Agenda has been formulated to ensure that all have an opportunity to input into the Review, that the Panel has the chance to question the LPA and the Applicant and that the other parties are able to feedback on the Review at the end of the session.

The session is therefore structured as follows:

- Introductions
- Case Officer Briefing
- Questions and Clarifications from the Panel to the LPA.
- Applicant Briefing
- Questions and Clarifications from the Panel to the Applicant.

- Break
- Panel Discussion
- Second Break
- Summary by Panel Chair
- Plenary Session: Applicant and LPA Feedback.

As can be seen there is opportunity for all to input in various parts of the session, and there is significant amount of content to be worked through. For this reason, we would ask you to closely follow the agenda and the guidance below to ensure that the session runs to time, is well structured and the Panel Report is accurate and full of relevant content.

Introductions (10 minutes)

Directed by the Panel Chair, you will be encouraged to briefly introduce yourself, relate your area of expertise and your biography. This usually takes less than a minute for each Panellist.

The Local Planning Authority and then the Applicant teams will then briefly introduce themselves including their area of expertise.

First Round Comments

The first round will usually concentrate on the macro issues, giving more general comments on the scheme. These should be clearly informed by the Applicant and LPA briefings, the site visit, National and Local Policy and good practice in the area of expertise you are being asked to give advice on. As each Panellist gives their feedback in turn, we encourage you to listen, engage and take notes, as the points made may inspire you to make further comment in the second round.

It is tempting to provide your comments as a series of rhetorical questions.

Rhetorical questions have some advantage in that they may have several meanings and can provoke more creative responses from applicants. However, it is also the case that they can appear vague- different participants in the meeting may have different answers to the question and therefore derive different meanings, although this may not be explicit at the time. This can lead to confusion in the report as the authors struggle to ensure that it accurately reflects your intention. We have some criticism from Applicants that the report can appear vague, and want to avoid this. We would therefore encourage you to avoid vague statements or too many rhetorical questions so that the resulting comments can be as clear as possible.

After you have delivered your comments, the Panel Chair may ask further questions to clarify them, to encourage you to turn any rhetorical questions into statements and to elicit further comment. The Panel Manager may also ask you to clarify for the record your comments to ensure accuracy of the Report.

Second Round Comments

In the second round of comments, you will be given an opportunity to cover any points that have been inspired by those in the first round, and then to make more micro, detailed points.

Again, you may be asked further questions by the Chair to clarify your statements and to elicit further comment.

Second Break (10 minutes)

This break serves a number of functions. It is intended that the Panel, the LPA and the Applicant Team meet in their separate groups.

The LPA and Applicant team will be discussing their responses to the Panel feedback so far, ready for the Plenary Session.

The Panel Chair will be thinking about their summary of your collective comments and may therefore ask you for a short summary to help draw this together.

Chair Summary (5 minutes)

The Chair will summarise and draw together the different themes of the Panel feedback from each specialism, and relate these to the issues the LPA and Applicant require addressing. The summary should be clear, concise and related to National and Local Policy and good practice in the disciplines under consideration. The aim of this summary to provide helpful advice to raise the quality of the scheme and not to question the principle of development.

Plenary Session – Applicant and LPA Feedback (20 minutes)

This is run by the Panel Manager who will invite first the Applicant and then the LPA to give the Panel feedback on what they have just heard. This is an opportunity for them to ask the Panel questions to obtain clarification on their comments.

This is intended to inspire an open, transparent and structured dialogue between each of the LPA, the Applicant and Panel teams to clarify the advice being given so that the report can be amended as required. The feedback and clarification should be kept brief and to the point so that the session does not overrun and to ensure that it is helpful to all.

The intention is that any comments or feedback are addressed in the session to avoid post-meeting feedback which can be troublesome to deal with when all parties have left the meeting.

Session Close

At the end of the session, the Panel Manager will:

- Thank the panel members, as well as the applicant and Local Planning Authority, for their time and effort.
- Explain that Place Services will begin the process of writing the report. This will take 15 working days and will be completed using a recording of the panel discussion to ensure that their views are accurately represented.
- In order to further ensure a high standard of accuracy, the report will then be commented on by the panel members and, subsequently, the Panel Chair before a final version is sent to the LPA.
- Once the relevant planning officer from the LPA has confirmed that they view the report to be an accurate representation of the QRP session, they will then issue it to the applicant.

6.0 Payment of Panel

Payment Details & How Payment is Issued

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

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

NB: the fees include travel and any expenses occurred

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

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

NB: the fees include travel and any expenses occurred

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

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

Email: ap.servicecentre@essex.gov.uk

Telephone: 03330 135862



8.0 FAQ's

What if there is conflict between panel members?

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

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

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

How can I leave the panel?

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



9.0 Declarations & Conflict of Interest

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

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

Where a conflict of interest is raised and declared, this will be assessed by the Panel Manager. Examples of conflict of interest which may not affect the review include working for the same applicant on a different project, or providing advice separately on another project to the local authority.

In such cases, the Panel manager will ask you to declare this at the start of the review session so that everyone understands that your advice is being given in this context.

However other conflicts of interest may have a more profound effect on the review. For example you may have worked on the project being reviewed in the past, or you may perceive that there is an opportunity for the applicant or local authority to put you under pressure due to a considerable amount of other work you are conducting for them. You may live in close proximity to the site.

In such cases you will be asked to step down from a review.

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www.essexdesignguide.co.uk/qualitypanel