



Oxford Design  
Review Panel



# Oxford Design Review Panel

Recruitment Pack | Oct 2020



## 1.0 About Oxford

Oxford is a world-renowned historic city with a rich and diverse built heritage. As a global centre of learning and innovation it attracts approximately 7 million visitors every year, and is an attractive place to live, work and study.

Oxford enjoys a broad and active economy within the city, with a fast-growing and educated population. Beyond its historic centre, Oxford is home to many distinct communities. Despite low levels of unemployment, there are challenges for the city including social inequality driven by a lack of affordable housing, congestion and areas of poor air quality.

Oxford is surrounded by a rich and biodiverse natural environment. The recently adopted Oxford Local Plan sets out the future vision for the city. The Council have pledged to achieve net zero carbon emissions by 2050.

## 1.1 About the Oxford Design Review Panel (ODRP)

The ODRP was established in 2014 to provide an independent, design evaluation service for development proposals within Oxford. The multi-disciplinary panel comprises expertise and skills in the built environment and is an essential part of the planning process, promoting high quality design to help create better buildings, streets and public spaces within the city.

Oxford City Council is committed to the process of design review and its particular value to Oxford. The Council is keen to ensure that the ODRP remains relevant and effective, and delivers a wide range of benefits, not only in terms of adding value to development schemes but in managing change positively and creating a lasting legacy of high-quality design and placemaking for the whole city.

**Cllr Alex Hollingsworth, Cabinet Member for Planning and Housing**

**Delivery, said:** *“Oxford City Council is committed to ensuring that the growth of this beautiful, historic city is managed in a sustainable way with a commitment to maintaining high quality design and a responsible approach to finite land resources.*

*“The ODRP has and will continue to be an integral part of the planning process for major schemes in Oxford. Refreshing our service offer will ensure we can continue to provide a well-respected design review service.”*

## 2.0 About the panel

We pay panel members an honorarium for attending design reviews. The rates, which include preparation and follow up time, are as follows:

Half-day review meetings	£300* + VAT
Full-day review meetings	£400* + VAT
Follow-up review meetings	£200* + VAT

\*Panel Chairs are paid an additional £100

Reasonable travel expenses will also be paid.

## 2.1 Panel expertise and structure

The panel will consist of approximately 40 leading practitioners from various disciplines. We will select a Chair and two/three Vice Chairs from the panel, who will lead design review meetings. Full panels comprise of the Chair plus at least 4 panel members.

As well as design review panels, panel members will have the opportunity to contribute across a range of training and workshop activities that Design South East undertakes with Oxford City Council.

The panel will include a balance of skills and expertise:

- **Urban Designers and architects**
- **Landscape architects**
- **Public realm experts**
- **Historic Environment experts**
- **Energy and sustainability experts**
- **Local authority planning experts**
- **Transport and street experts**
- **Regeneration and viability experts**
- **Other areas of expertise such as: infrastructure & civil engineering, inclusive design, co-design & community engagement**
- **Early career or graduate mentee panel members**

At least 70% of selected panel members will have previous experience of serving on a design review panel.

At least 30% of selected panel members will have local knowledge, for example having worked on significant projects within Oxford.



## 2.3 How does the panel work?

The ODRP will review all major schemes within the city and some sites may be reviewed multiple times through informal workshops. Your main role as a panel member will be to take part in design review panels, although we may ask you to contribute across workshops, design policy review, charettes or training events.

The ODRP process is well integrated within Oxford City Council's planning processes. It will be important to understand the planning context and background thoroughly for each project. Part of the panel's role will be to gain the confidence and trust of both planning officers and the planning committee, which will require the panel to have a good understanding and respect for the local policy context and local development challenges.

You should expect to take part in a panel or event at least once every three to four months. We may schedule in fortnightly design review meetings for up to six months at a time.

A typical design review of one scheme takes half a day, and two schemes a full day, and will include site visits, a briefing from the local authority, a presentation from the scheme promoter and time for discussion and feedback. Some larger schemes take more than half a day. Sometimes we undertake follow-up reviews where a smaller panel can meet with the promoters and local authority for around two hours.

After the design review meeting the Design South East panel manager who was present will draft a report. This will be circulated to panel members to check that it is accurate and comprehensive. The report sets out the panel's expert opinion and advice.

### 3.0 Person specification: Panel Member

#### *Essential:*

- A commitment to improving the quality of buildings, streets and places through sustainable approaches.
- An understanding of the environmental, developmental, planning and economic context of England.
- A qualification in one of the built environment professions (Membership/Eligible for Membership of a relevant Professional Body is desirable).
- Experience in practice demonstrating a thorough understanding of the design, development and planning process, with evidence of leadership.
- An understanding and appreciation of roles played by other professionals, consultants and players in the built environment, including planners, councillors and community leaders.
- An ability to critically appraise development proposals in a positive and constructive manner.
- An ability to communicate complex design observations to a range of audiences, both lay and professional.
- An ability to act in the public interest and adhere to the seven Nolan Principles of Public Life.
- Availability to attend at least 3 meetings per year (all day duration), plus preparation time.
- Commitment to attend an annual panel review day, for which there will not be a remuneration fee.

#### *Desirable:*

- A good knowledge of Oxford or the specific contextual considerations of the city.
- A good understanding or experience of working within local authority contexts.
- Additional or multiple expertise, such as sustainability, viability, co-design.
- Experience of development in sensitive historic contexts.
- Experience of housing and new communities.

### 3.1 Person specification: Chair

A Chair will be appointed from the selected panel. The online application form includes a question where you can indicate if you would like to apply for a Chair or Vice Chair role.

In addition to meeting the selection criteria for panel members, the following additional criteria will apply:

- The Chair should be a well-respected professional and able to act as figurehead for the panel, the wider council, city and place.
- Personal qualities of authority, diplomacy and meeting management, necessary to guide panel discussions and maintain a tone of constructive criticism.
- An ability to synthesize and summarise broad, disparate or conflicting views and reach a consensus on the key issues to be addressed.
- Previous experience or familiarity with Oxford
- Previous experience of serving on other design review panels.
- Availability to attend at least 12 review meetings per year (all day duration), plus preparation time. Ideally as many as possible, which at maximum could be twice per month.
- Availability to attend quarterly review meetings with Oxford City Council and stakeholders, as well as possible one-off meetings outside of review dates.

### 3.2 Person specification: Vice Chairs

In addition to meeting the selection criteria for panel members, the following additional criteria will apply:

- Vice Chairs should be able to stand-in as figureheads for the panel and will act to support the Chair with complimentary expertise. They may also be asked to partake in regular training and engagement events within the city.
- Personal qualities of authority, diplomacy and meeting management, necessary to guide panel discussions and maintain a tone of constructive criticism.
- An ability to synthesize and summarise broad, disparate or conflicting views and reach a consensus on the key issues to be addressed.
- Previous experience or familiarity with Oxford
- Previous experience of serving on other design review panels.



- Availability to attend up to 6 review meetings per year (all day duration), plus preparation time.
- Availability to attend quarterly review meetings with Oxford City Council and stakeholders, as well as possible one-off meetings outside of review dates.

### **3.3 Mentee panel members**

Up to 4 mentee panel members will be selected from unsuccessful applications.

Please note that this will be an unpaid role and will last a term of 12-months. Mentee panel members are invited to observe design review meetings, events and training sessions, and are bound to the same Codes of Conduct and confidentiality agreements as panel members.

This role will offer early career or graduate professionals an opportunity to gain experience in design review, improve professional networks and offer the possibility to join the panel formally after the initial 12-month term.

## 4.0 Selection process

Recruitment of the panel will be carried out through an open, objective process. Applications will be assessed jointly by officers from Oxford City Council and Design South East.

Shortlisted candidates for the Chair and Vice Chair roles will be invited to interview on **Wednesday November 18<sup>th</sup> 2020** and may be pre-interviewed by telephone before this date. **Please indicate your interest and availability on the application form.**

The panel induction will take place on **Tuesday 1<sup>st</sup> December 2020** where all panel members will be expected to attend. **Please confirm your availability on the application form.**

Design South East is committed to making our panel recruitment practices inclusive, balanced and diverse. We encourage applications from under-represented groups in design governance and built environment sectors.

## 4.1 Commitment

Panel member term will be 1 year, with potential to extend to 3 years.

We ask panel members to commit a minimum of 3-6 days per year which includes design review meetings and preparation time, or other activities for Design South East. Booked review sessions generally take place at a venue in proximity to the site under review or occasionally at the Town Hall. Travel details for each review are usually detailed with each project agenda.

During COVID-19, we have moved to facilitating our design reviews, workshops and surgeries online.

## 4.2 Relationship to your employer

While we are very grateful that employers release their staff to attend design review and other panel duties, it is important to note that Design South East expert panel members are appointed as individuals rather than representatives of their company, organisation or other interests. It is not possible to send a substitute panel member from your organisation.



## 5.0 How to apply

1. Complete the online application form by following this link:  
<https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/SDNGHZ5>

*There are three questions requiring longer answers: one that asks you for up to 150 words about your experience and lessons learnt from giving design advice. Another asks for up to 150 words about your professional experience. And finally, one that asks for a statement of up to 200 words about why you want to join the panel and the contribution you think you can make. You may find it helpful to prepare these answers in advance and paste them into the form.*

2. Email your CV\* (no more than 4 pages) to [jade@designsoutheast.org](mailto:jade@designsoutheast.org)

\*Please do not send any other information such as portfolios or testimonials.

## 5.1 Deadline

The deadline for applications is **12.00 noon on Monday 2 November 2020**. We plan to make decisions by Monday 23 November. If, having thoroughly read this pack, you have further questions, please contact Jade Huang: [jade@designsoutheast.org](mailto:jade@designsoutheast.org) or call 01634 401166 and request a call back.

## 5.2 Key dates

Monday 5 October	Recruitment launch and pack issued
<b>Monday 2 Nov (12.00 noon)</b>	<b>All application submissions deadline</b>
Wednesday 18 Nov	Chairs & Vice Chairs interviews
Monday 23 Nov	Panel members announced*
Tuesday 1 December	Panel Induction day

\*If you are selected to join the panel, you will be notified by Monday 23 November. Unfortunately, given the number of applications, we will be unable to provide individual feedback to unsuccessful applicants.

## 6.0 The role of Design Review & 10 principles of Design Review

Design South East's design review services provide timely, expert and independent design advice to local authorities, developers and design teams through a discursive process of critical appraisal of development proposals. Panels reviews a wide range of development proposals. The panels consider schemes following procedures and guidelines which have been developed by Design South East and agreed with our local authority partners. While design review panels are purely advisory, the National Planning Policy Framework states:

*'In assessing applications, local planning authorities should have regard to...any recommendations made by design review panels' (paragraph 129).*

This means that any comments from a panel will be given due weight by planning officers and planning committees and may be referred to by planning inspectors at appeal.

### **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.

### **Expert**

It is carried out by suitably trained people who are experienced in design and know how to criticise constructively. Review is usually most respected where it is carried out by professional peers of the project designers, because their standing and expertise will be acknowledged.

### **Multidisciplinary**

It combines the different perspectives of architects, urban designers, urban and rural planners, landscape architects, engineers and other specialist experts to provide a complete, rounded assessment.

### **Accountable**

The 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.

### **Transparent**

The panel's remit, membership, governance processes and funding should always be in the public domain.

### **Proportionate**



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

### **Timely**

It takes place 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.

### **Advisory**

A design review panel does not make decisions, but it offers impartial advice for the people who do.

### **Objective**

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

### **Accessible**

Its findings and advice are clearly expressed in terms that design teams, decision makers and clients can all understand and make use of.

## 7.0 About Design South East

[Design South East](#) is an independent, not-for-profit organisation that delivers expert design advice for local authorities, the development sector and communities. Over the past 25 years DSE has worked with many organisations influencing the quality of places and buildings.

We support the policy, planning and design process by providing clear, independent and constructive advice that combines local knowledge with informed, insightful expertise, in a flexible and agile way that provides value for money.

We develop relationships and understanding between local authorities, developers, project teams, and communities through facilitation. Ultimately, we aim to develop a strong design culture across the South East, by nurturing the skills and capacity of people and organisations in the South East, through well-programmed professional training and support.

Our design review services operate throughout London, the South East and the East of England. We work regularly with more than 30 local authorities and run local design review panels in eleven local authority areas including Kingston, Sutton, Guildford, Ashford and Brentwood. We provide informal design advice to local authorities and deliver training for officers and elected members through Kent Design and Design Surrey, our shared CPD programme for the public and private sectors.

**Chris Lamb, Director of Design South East:** *“DSE is looking forward to developing a bespoke approach to this unique city and to working collaboratively with the council and its stakeholders. Our ambition is to ensure that the value of the panel’s expertise and innovative thinking is used to maximise its beneficial impact on policies, projects and people.”*

Oxford City Council in partnership with Design South East deliver the Oxford Design Review Panel Service (ODRP).

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