

Report for:	Regulatory Committee	Item Number:	
Title:	Delivering Quality in new development		
Report Authorised by:	Stephen Kelly – Assistant Director - Planning		
Lead Officer:	Stephen Kelly - Assistant Director – Planning		
Ward(s) affected: All		Report for Key/Non Key Decisions:	

1. Describe the issue under consideration

This report outlines the measures that the Planning Service is undertaking to improve the quality of new development coming forward.

The aspiration to improve quality is a consistent area of feedback from the community, and from members. The opportunities provided by a new planning policy framework*, and the expected developer interest in our regeneration areas*, means has served to highlight the need for a review of the existing measures targeted towards improving design quality.

2. Cabinet Member introduction

The planning service improvement journey includes not only an aspiration to improve processes and efficiency, but also to respond to widespread aspiration that the Council works to raise the quality of all new development delivered in the borough.

This paper, to be accompanied by a presentation from officers, aims to update the Regulatory Committee on two key elements of that project; proposals for a new Haringey Quality Charter* and the establishment of a “Quality Review Panel.”

Alongside changes made already, to the Planning Protocol*, the emerging programmes to support member and officers in the development of their skills and expertise, and the concerted work to improve the capability and capacity of the planning service, I am confident that these measures will have a positive role to play in our journey towards excellence.

3. Recommendations

That the committee note the steps being taken to improve design quality in the borough.

4. Alternative options considered

None

5. Background information

As part of the Development Management improvement plan, work is already underway to improve the oversight and senior manager input into strategic planning applications. Changes to the Planning Protocol in 2014 also enabled, for the first time, pre-application briefings to members of the planning committee during the formative design stages – in line with the expectations in the Localism Act* and National Planning Policy Framework. The planning service improvement plan also provides for a refresh and review of the Haringey Design Panel, to ensure that its organisation and membership can provide support to the Council officers and members in the robust assessment of development.

Planning Policy

The recently published Local Plan consultation documents* incorporate a refresh of all design policy in the borough. Of note, the consultation draft Development Management Development Plan Document (DPD)* proposes a “Haringey Quality Charter” and requires all new development to make a positive commitment to its delivery. The charters core requirements (contained in policy DM1) are that new development:

- Make a positive contribution to a place, improving the character and quality of an area;
- Relate positively to neighbouring structures, new or old, to create a harmonious whole;
- Confidently address feedback from local consultation;
- Demonstrate how the quality of the development will be secured when it is built; and
- Is inclusive and incorporates sustainable design and construction principles.

The consultation draft Development Management DPD also provides a framework for considering density (Policy DM17: Housing Mix) and the location of tall buildings cross the borough (Policy DM5: Siting and Design of Tall Buildings) – using the evidence of the Urban Characterisation Study* undertaken by officers to support the local plan process.

Quality Review Panel

To support both offices and the planning committee in decision making, the planning service has undertaken a review of advice services. This has included engagement with a number of leading design commentators/advisors and developers across London and the review of practice across the country to determine appropriate and affordable measures that support the aspirations to improve quality. In seeking to improve advice to the Council, and recognising the scarcity of expert resources, consideration has been given to existing capability of Haringey and its partners, and the role of the existing design review panel.

From these discussions and explorations, it is clear that there was very limited interest amongst leading design professionals to become a dedicated design advisor to the Borough; to do so would put at risk important relationships with national clients for only modest (and short term) remuneration. Equally, capacity within other public authorities to release resources to Haringey, to supplement the existing urban design and conservation resources in house was also limited; a consequence of growing scarcity and staffing across public authorities. Officers were therefore guided towards the models of Design Council/CABE and public bodies such as LB Newham and London Legacy Development Corporation who operate a “professional” design review process, using an expert chair and a recruited panel of experts to undertake a range of reviews.

Having reviewed the type of application expected by the Council in the next 2 years, and the importance of a locally distinct design review process reflecting a need for local understanding as well as national expertise, the service has now taken the decision to introduce a “professional” design review capability – along the lines of the London Legacy Development Corporation. To date, an independent chair has been appointed alongside a resource to provide secretariat and support to panel members and Council officers. Adverts for panel members are to be published imminently and a recruitment process will follow shortly afterwards. The appointed Chair of the panel Peter Studdert is scheduled to provide a presentation to the Committee on the operation of the panel at the meeting.

Enhanced pre-application advice

Regulatory Committee have recently (February 2015) considered proposals to extend the scope and range of pre-application services offered*. The charged services to be introduced from April reflect the introduction of the QRP and also the extension of services to householders to help support higher quality domestic development.

6. Comments of the Chief Finance Officer and financial implications

The £10K cost of establishing the new QRP has been met from within the existing budget. The cost of running Panel meetings is expected to be met in full by the charges set out in the published charge schedule or through Planning Performance Agreements (PPA).

7. Comments of the Assistant Director of Corporate Governance and legal implications

n/a

8. Equalities and Community Cohesion Comments

n/a

9. Head of Procurement Comments

None

10. Use of Appendices

None

11. Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985

Localism Act – 2011

National Planning Policy Framework – March 2012

Haringey's Local Plan Strategic Policies – March 2013

Haringey's consultation draft Alterations to the Strategic Policies – February 2015

Haringey's consultation draft Development Management DPD – February 2015

Haringey's consultation draft Site Allocations DPD – February 2015

Haringey's consultation draft Tottenham AAP – February 2015

Haringey's Urban Characterisation Study – February 2015

Haringey's Planning Protocol – June 2014

Supporting High Quality Development in Haringey – Charges from 1 April 2015