



LONDON BOROUGH OF TOWER HAMLETS  
ISLE OF DOGS AND SOUTH POPLAR  
COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT PANEL

Handbook 2023

IN PARTNERSHIP WITH

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# CONTENTS

1	Introduction	3	10	Meeting dates	9
2	Panel composition	4	11	Briefing and training	10
3	Panel remit	5	12	Review agendas	11
4	Role of the Panel	6	13	Panel reports	12
5	Independence and confidentiality	6	14	Panel charges	13
6	Conflicts of interest	7	15	Panel membership	13
7	Freedom of information	7	16	Key documents	14
8	Types of meetings	8		<i>Appendix A: confidentiality</i>	15
9	Expenses	9		<i>Appendix B: conflicts of interest</i>	16

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# 1. INTRODUCTION

The Mayor of London has identified the Isle of Dogs & South Poplar (IoD&SP) as one of 12 Opportunity Areas in East London. It is expected to experience substantial growth over the next 20 years, with the delivery of 31,000 new homes and 110,000 new jobs. In January 2020, the London Borough of Tower Hamlets Regeneration Team took on the role of overseeing the Opportunity Area Planning Framework (OAPF) Delivery Plan (published September 2019).

The IoD&SP Opportunity Area (OA) (which includes the wards of Blackwall and Cubitt Town, Canary Wharf, Island Gardens and Poplar) covers a significant area of 390 hectares at the centre of London's expansion eastwards, and has capacity to make a valuable contribution towards supporting London's housing and employment needs. The OA has many unique physical characteristics which also present some notable constraints, as described below.

- Movement between the areas that make up the IoD&SP is challenging. It is separated into distinct areas, including the Isle of Dogs, Canary Wharf and South Poplar, to the north of the Docklands Light Railway and Aspen Way.
- The area is compact, and surrounded on all sides by the River Thames.
- There are only two principal highway access points on and off the island.
- There are a number of conservation areas protecting the local area's dockland heritage. The historic docks also present a barrier to movement between different areas.

The IoD&SP is experiencing high levels of development pressure, and it is important that the need for key social and physical infrastructure to support the growth in the area is not underestimated.

The OAPF identifies eight key opportunities for growth in the IoD&SP.

- Optimising opportunities for a range of new homes to be delivered that meet local need and contribute towards London's wider needs.
- Enhancing and expanding Crossharbour district centre, and local parades such as Poplar High Street, to accompany the wider housing and employment growth.
- Providing a strategic reserve of office employment floorspace in line with London Plan policy.
- Upgrading Canary Wharf to a metropolitan centre by expanding the range of services and retail floorspace on offer.
- Breaking down social and socio-economic barriers between Poplar and the Isle of Dogs.
- Using the catalysing effect of the new Elizabeth Line station at Canary Wharf to continue the growth in popularity of the area for businesses and residents.
- Enhancing the environmental quality of existing green infrastructure such as Mudchute Farm. Creating opportunities to extend the network of green and blue grids.
- Protecting and enhancing community and heritage assets such as Mudchute Farm, Docklands Sailing and Watersports Centre and the dockside character of the area.

The impact of growth in the IoD&SP will be felt beyond each individual site boundary and development, and must therefore work hard to join up with and enhance the surrounding neighbourhood too.

To continue the engagement work carried out with the IoD&SP local community, the OAPF recommended a Community Development Panel be set up. This will allow regular discussion of issues relating to planning and development in the OA. To help deliver these priorities, LB Tower Hamlets established the Community Development Panel in 2021. The panel will play a vital role in ensuring that growth in the local area delivers benefits for all of the community in the IoD&SP.



## 2. PANEL COMPOSITION

The IoD&SP Community Development Panel brings together people with a passion for and knowledge of the IoD&SP area. It is made up of 14 group members, plus the chair.

Community Development Panel members are chosen to:

- bring a strong understanding of the IoD&SP area, the way it works, its history and its inhabitants
- provide positive advice from a community perspective on proposals for development and change
- advise on the needs of existing and new residential and business communities.

Membership of the panel is reviewed after the first year of operation, so that panel members have the opportunity to decide if they want to carry on being involved, and LB Tower Hamlets can assess whether the group is performing its intended role effectively.

The panel is chaired by David Ubaka, architect and urban designer.



Mudchute Farm



### 3. PANEL REMIT

The aim of the Isle of Dogs & South Poplar OAPF is to provide greater certainty to the community on how they can influence development, ensure all growth in the area meets the aims of the OAPF's Good Growth definition, and has the potential to benefit both existing and new residents. Good Growth looks to communities, as participants in planning for change, to ensure new development delivers homes, neighbourhoods and workplaces that are sensitive to the existing local context.

The IoD&SP Community Development Panel has been established to support LB Tower Hamlets in achieving high quality design and placemaking that reflects the priorities of local people. It performs a public role, and the Handbook for the panel is therefore published on LB Tower Hamlets' website, including the names of the panel members. However, the individuals on the panel do not perform a representative role, on behalf of a community group for example, nor are they required to have professional skills or experience. They are appointed so that they can contribute their own personal experience of living or working in the IoD&SP area.

The panel will provide independent advice to the planning authority as a 'critical friend' to support the delivery of high quality development in the IoD&SP.

LB Tower Hamlets aims to refer schemes to the Community Development Panel at an early design stage, to ensure that local priorities and concerns can inform the design process. Advice is likely to be most effective before a scheme becomes too fixed. Early engagement with the Community Development Panel will help test and understand the appropriateness of the proposals to the area, and the needs of its communities. The panel is expected to review both schemes proposed by developers and planning approaches initiated by LB Tower Hamlets as part of the OAPF.

The panel considers significant development proposals in the IoD&SP area. Significance is not necessarily only related to scale – but may also fall into the following categories.

#### **Significance related to size or use, for example:**

- large buildings or groups of buildings
- infrastructure projects such as bridges or transport hubs
- large public realm proposals
- masterplans, design codes or design guidance.

#### **Significance related to site, for example:**

- proposals affecting sensitive views
- developments with a major impact on their context
- schemes involving significant public investment.

#### **Significant social infrastructure, for example:**

- schools, or education buildings
- parks and open spaces
- streets, cycle and footpaths
- public buildings for example libraries
- arts and cultural projects.

As with normal pre-application procedure, community review advice before an application is submitted remains confidential with the applicant and the planning authority. This encourages applicants to share proposals openly and honestly with the Community Development Panel – and ensures that they receive the most useful advice.

Once an application has been submitted, the Community Development Panel's comments will form part of the summary document included in the planning report published on LB Tower Hamlets' website.



## 4. ROLE OF THE PANEL

The Community Development Panel provides local views and recommendations to LB Tower Hamlets at key stages of the planning process for the developments in IoD&SP.

The Community Development Panel plays an advisory role in the planning process. It is for LB Tower Hamlets to decide what weight to place on the panel's comments and recommendations – balanced with other planning considerations.

If any comments made by the Community Development Panel require clarification, it is the responsibility of the presenting team, whether project promoters or LB Tower Hamlets officers, to draw this to the attention of the group chair (if during the meeting) or the group manager at Frame Projects (if the report of the meeting requires clarification).



Saracen Street, South Poplar

## 5. INDEPENDENCE & CONFIDENTIALITY

The IoD&SP Community Development Panel is facilitated on behalf of LB Tower Hamlets by Frame Projects, an external consultancy. LB Tower Hamlets has appointed Frame Projects to manage the panel, and to maintain its independence. This means that review meetings are arranged and managed by Frame Projects staff, and the panel is chaired and the discussion managed by David Ubaka, who is employed on a consultancy basis by Frame Projects. All reports and formal recommendations are written by the Community Development Panel manager, and issued with the approval of the chair, with no prior approval from LB Tower Hamlets.

The processes for managing the Community Development Panel, the appointment of group members, including the selection of the chair, and the administration of meetings are agreed in partnership with LB Tower Hamlets.

Group members are required to keep confidential all information acquired in the course of their role on the panel, with the exception of reports that are in the public domain.

Further details are provided in the confidentiality procedure included in Appendix A.





## 6. CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

The IoD&SP Community Development Panel is intended to provide a constructive forum for applicants, their project teams and LB Tower Hamlets planning officers who would like to understand the views of local people.

In order to ensure the group's independence and professionalism, it is essential that group members avoid any actual or perceived conflicts of interest that may arise in relation to schemes considered during the meetings that they attend. Minimising the potential for conflicts of interest will be important to the impartiality of the panel.

Group members are asked to ensure that any possible conflicts of interest are identified before each meeting. For example, if a group member or a close relative is directly involved, has a financial interest in, or would directly benefit from a scheme or site being reviewed, this may be a conflict of interest. Members should declare potential conflicts of interest to Frame Projects. This does not include group members' homes, as the Community Development Panel has been set up to include the perspective of local residents.

Appendix B contains more detail on what constitutes a conflict of interest. Meeting agendas provided in advance of reviews will include information on the project and on who is involved. When these are sent out, each group member will be asked to check for any conflict of interest, and to contact Frame Projects immediately if they believe that there is a conflict.

In cases where there is a conflict, a group member may be asked to step down from a review. In other cases, a declaration of interest may be sufficient. If in any doubt at all, group members should contact the Community Development Panel manager at Frame Projects, Tom Bolton – [tom@frame-projects.co.uk](mailto:tom@frame-projects.co.uk) – to discuss.

## 7. FREEDOM OF INFORMATION

As a public authority, LB Tower Hamlets is subject to the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (the Act). All requests made to LB Tower Hamlets information with regard to the IoD&SP Community Development Panel will be handled according to the provisions of the Act. Legal advice may be required on a case-by-case basis to establish whether any exemptions apply under the Act.



Trinity Wharf © Mathew Black, Flickr





## 8. TYPES OF MEETINGS

A Community Development Panel meeting will be held for major development proposals, masterplans, significant planning policy or guidance documents. Review meetings will take place from outline design stage onwards, so that the panel can provide advice to the scheme promoter and to LB Tower Hamlets.

All members of the Community Development Panel including the chair, will be invited to attend. LB Tower Hamlets officers and appropriate stakeholders may also be invited to attend and asked to give their views after the scheme has been presented.

Community Development Panel meetings will usually take place at a stage when a client and design team have decided their preferred option for development of a site, and have sufficient drawings, models, etc. for a comprehensive discussion. There will often be a second pre-application review, to provide an opportunity for the panel to comment on more detailed design matters before a planning submission.

The scheme will be presented by a member of the design team, normally the lead architect, following a brief introduction by the client. Presentations may be made with drawings or PowerPoint and models as appropriate.

A typical Community Review Panel meeting will last 120 minutes: 5 minutes of introductions; 10 minutes briefing by planning officers; 30 minutes presentation by the design team; 65 minutes discussion; 10 minutes summing up by the chair. Large projects may be split into smaller elements for the purposes of review, to ensure each element receives a fair share of discussion time, e.g. schemes with several development plots.

### ANNUAL MEETINGS

To support the Community Development Panel's role in the planning process, annual meetings will be arranged to provide an opportunity for reflection amongst the group on emerging themes and issues. This will also provide an opportunity for the Council to provide feedback on the impact of the panel's advice on schemes reviewed. Annual meetings will be facilitated by the Community Development Panel chair, and all panel members will be invited to attend.

### DEVELOPMENT SESSIONS

Training will be provided to equip panel members with the skills required to understand and constructively input to the review meetings. Development sessions may take a variety of formats, beginning with a panel induction meeting, and with potential to provide training on other areas such as: sustainable design, landscape design or more practical issues including how to read and interrogate architectural drawings. Topics will be identified with input from the panel members.



## 9. EXPENSES

IoD&SP Community Development Panel members are entitled to claim reasonable expenses for travel to review meetings and site visits, and for other costs incurred in order to attend meetings. Frame Projects will provide an expense form which should be completed and sent to the Community Development Panel Manager with receipts or other evidence of expenditure, before the date of the next group meeting.



Winter Lights 2020 © Garry Knight, Flickr

## 10. MEETING DATES

One Community Development Panel meeting is provisionally scheduled every month. These may be used to review development proposals, or for an annual meeting or development session. Meetings may also be required to provide advice on non-application matters such as planning policy development.

The group will meet between 18.30 and 20.30 on a Tuesday evening. The following dates are currently set for IoD&SP Community Development Panel meetings in 2023:

- 24 January
- 21 February
- 21 March
- 26 April
- 25 May
- 23 June
- 27 July
- 19 September
- 24 October
- 21 November
- 5 December



Tower Hamlets area © Jim Stephenson

## 11. BRIEFING & TRAINING

All Community Development Panel members are required to attend an induction meeting before taking part in review meetings. This includes briefings on the context in which development is taking place, and on the schemes likely to be reviewed. It also includes briefing on the panel's role, how it will be governed, and on practical arrangements.

Development sessions will be arranged for the panel on request, after discussion with members. This will be provided by professionals, who can also be called on by the Community Development Panel to provide additional briefing at review sessions, to ensure that the panel has all the information it requires.

The induction meeting and annual meetings provide opportunities to discuss the wider needs of panel members, including training needs, to ensure that they can fulfil their roles effectively.





## 12. REVIEW AGENDAS

Agendas will be issued to panel members in advance of each meeting. The agenda, and its contents, are confidential and should only be read by members of the panel.

For Full Community Development Panel meetings, a detailed agenda will be provided that includes notes on the planning context, details of the project to be considered, the applicant and consultant team, and those presenting the project, as appropriate.

A project description provided by those presenting the project will set out factual information about the project. Key plans and images will also be provided to help to give a sense of the scope and nature of the project under review.

Where a project returns for a second or subsequent review, the report of the previous review will be provided with the agenda.



Mudchute Park © Alain Roullier, Flickr







Millwall Outer Dock

## 13. PANEL REPORTS

During a Community Development Panel meeting the panel's manager, Frame Projects, will take notes of the discussion to form the basis of a report. Reports will be drafted, approved by the panel chair and issued within 10 working days. The report summarises the comments and advice provided by the Community Development Panel and clearly sets out specific recommendations.

At pre-application stage, reports will provide clear advice on the appropriateness of the proposals to the area, and the needs of its communities. This may assist Council officers in negotiating improvements.

The Community Development Panel has an advisory role in LB Tower Hamlets' planning process, and the project team should consult planning officers following a review to agree how to respond to points raised in the report.

The report at this stage is not normally made public and is shared only with LB Tower Hamlets, the applicant and design team, and any other stakeholders that LB Tower Hamlets has involved in the project.

Once planning applications are submitted, the report may provide guidance to LB Tower Hamlets officers in reviewing the planning application with regard to community views.

If the proposal is reviewed at an application stage the report will be a public document kept within the proposal's case file and published on LB Tower Hamlets' website. Where the final review of a scheme takes place at a pre-application stage, the report of this meeting may also be made public once an application is submitted.



## 14. PANEL CHARGES

Applicants are referred to the Community Development Panel by LB Tower Hamlets as an external service and fees are paid by the applicant to Frame Projects for delivering this service.

The current charge for an Isle of Dogs Community Development Panel meeting is:

- £3,500 + VAT Community Development Panel meeting

The meeting charge includes a £500 contribution to a pool which is used to fund development and training sessions for panel members, and future panel recruitment.

The cost of venue hire and food, if required, would also be in addition to the charge above.

Payment should be made by the applicant in advance of the review, and the review may be cancelled if payment is not received five days in advance of the meeting. Full details will be provided when an invitation to present to the group is confirmed.

Where a scheduled review is subsequently cancelled or postponed by the applicant, an administrative charge will be applied:

- 50% of full cost : within one week of the scheduled review
- £600 + VAT : between one and four weeks before the review

## 15. PANEL MEMBERSHIP

### Chair, David Ubaka

David Ubaka is an architect and urban designer, with 25 years' experience working in both the private and public sectors. He has been the managing director of his practice since 2012, and has architectural, public realm and street design, policy document creation, transport strategy and urban regeneration expertise. He previously worked for Transport for London as Head of Design. He is a member of the Haringey, Barking and Dagenham, Havering Quality Review Panels and Historic England's Historic Places Panel.

### Community Development Panel members

Kanishka Aubeelack  
Ruth Bravery  
Lorraine Cavanagh  
Bob Erens  
Sister Christine Frost  
Puneet Jaiswal  
Pramod Mistry  
Dipesh Patel  
Razmin Rahman  
Julia Shannahan  
Gerry Walsh  
Rey Syuen Wang Yeh



# 16. KEY DOCUMENTS

## Isle of Dogs & South Poplar

Mayor of London, Isle of Dogs and South Poplar Opportunity Area Planning Framework (Sep 2019)

<https://data.london.gov.uk/dataset/isle-of-dogs-and-south-poplar-opportunity-area-planning-framework>

Isle of Dogs Neighbourhood Plan 2019-2031

<https://democracy.towerhamlets.gov.uk/documents/s166738/Appendix%203%20-%20Clean%20Edit%20Referendum%20Version.pdf>

Tower Hamlets Local Plan 2031: Managing Growth and Sharing Benefits (Adopted Jan 2020)

[https://www.towerhamlets.gov.uk/Documents/Planning-and-building-control/Strategic-Planning/Local-Plan/TH\\_Local\\_Plan\\_2031\\_accessibility\\_checked.pdf](https://www.towerhamlets.gov.uk/Documents/Planning-and-building-control/Strategic-Planning/Local-Plan/TH_Local_Plan_2031_accessibility_checked.pdf)

London Borough of Tower Hamlets Statement of Community Involvement

[https://www.towerhamlets.gov.uk/Documents/Place\\_SCI\\_Strategy\\_v7.pdf](https://www.towerhamlets.gov.uk/Documents/Place_SCI_Strategy_v7.pdf)

## Greater London Authority

Mayor of London, The London Plan 2021

<https://www.london.gov.uk/what-we-do/planning/london-plan/new-london-plan/london-plan-2021>

Greater London Authority Good Growth by Design Outline

[https://www.london.gov.uk/sites/default/files/good\\_growth\\_web.pdf](https://www.london.gov.uk/sites/default/files/good_growth_web.pdf)

London Plan

[https://www.london.gov.uk/sites/default/files/the\\_london\\_plan\\_2021.pdf](https://www.london.gov.uk/sites/default/files/the_london_plan_2021.pdf)



Cubitt Town © It's No Game, Flickr





# APPENDIX A

## Confidentiality

The IoD&SP Community Development Panel provides a forum for advice and guidance to be provided at an early stage in projects, before proposals are public, when advice can have the most impact. Confidentiality is therefore very important.

1. Panel meetings are only to be attended by the panel's members, LB Tower Hamlets officers, and officers from stakeholder organisations involved in the project, as well as the applicant and their design team. If anyone else attends, it must be approved by the Community Development Panel manager, Frame Projects.
2. Members of the IoD&SP Community Development Panel will keep confidential all information provided to them as part of their role on the panel, and shall not use that information for their own benefit, nor disclose it to any third party (with the exception of reports that are in the public domain – see points 5 and 6).
3. The IoD&SP Community Development Panel's advice is provided in the form of a report written by Frame Projects, containing key points from the panel's discussion. If any applicant, architect or agent approaches a panel member for advice on a project subject to review (before, during or after), they should decline to comment and refer the inquiry to the panel manager, Frame Projects.
4. Following the meeting, the Community Development Panel manager writes a draft report, circulates it to the chair for comments and then makes any amendments. The panel manager will then distribute it to all those included on the meeting agenda.
5. If the proposal is at a pre-application stage, the report will not be made public and will only be shared with LB Tower Hamlets, the applicant and design team, and any other stakeholder bodies that LB Tower Hamlets has involved in the project.
6. If the proposal is reviewed at an application stage the report will be a public document kept within the proposal's case file and published on LB Tower Hamlets' website. Where the final review of a scheme takes place at a pre-application stage, the report of this meeting may also be made public once an application is submitted.
7. If a panel member wishes to share a final report with anyone, they must seek approval from the Community Development Panel manager, who will confirm whether or not the report is public.



## APPENDIX B

### Conflicts of interest

Following the selection of Community Development Panel members, each potential panel member will be asked to fill out a Declaration of Interest form. The form will identify if there are any conflicts which may preclude an individual's participation in the Community Development Panel.

An individual may be conflicted from becoming a panel member if they have a financial, commercial or professional interest in participating in the IoD&SP Community Development Panel.

Once the panel is fully established, to ensure the integrity and impartiality of advice given by the IoD&SP Community Development Panel, potential conflicts of interest will be checked before each panel meeting. The following process will apply:

1. All panel members are required to declare any conflicts of interest.
2. Panel members are notified of the scheme coming before the panel at least a week in advance. At this time panel members should check the meeting information provided and declare any possible interest in a project to Frame Projects.
3. The Community Development Panel manager, Frame Projects, in collaboration with the panel chair and LB Tower Hamlets officers, will determine if the conflict of interest is of a personal or prejudicial nature – that is, whether it will prevent the panel member from giving impartial advice.

4. In general, a panel member should not attend a review meeting if they have:

a financial, commercial or professional interest in a project that will be reviewed, its client and / or its site;

a financial, commercial or professional interest in a site that is adjacent to the project (not including a panel member's own home) that will be reviewed or upon which the project being reviewed will have a material impact;

a personal relationship with an individual or group involved in the project, or a related project, where that relationship prevents the panel member from being objective.

5. If it is deemed that a conflict of interest is of a prejudicial nature, the panel member should not take part in reviews for the proposal. They should also not take part in private discussions of the project and should not be in the room during the discussion of the project.
6. If it is deemed that a conflict of interest is personal, but not prejudicial, the panel member may be allowed to participate in the review. In this situation, the interest will be noted at the beginning of the review, discussed with the presenting teams and formally recorded in the review report.
7. Councillors and Council employees are not eligible to be panel members.

