London Panels & Remote Design Review

Key Points for Managing Remote Design Review

22.04.2020

1   **Delivery Method** Assess options for delivery platforms. The two main platforms used are Microsoft Teams and Zoom. The majority of panels are using Zoom[*] because it offers opportunities to see everyone in the meeting with Gallery View, there is a waiting room for people entering the meeting managed by the host, and it is easy to share the screen and view presentations. But Teams is also working well for some panels and is the preferred method for some local authorities.

2   **Remote Review Guidance** A guidance pack for applicants and panel members is needed if the remote process continues for some time. The review process is likely to run more smoothly is everyone is clear about the Panel's approach. Part of the pack could be a Digital Protocol to explain how the session will be managed, which platform is being used, and the way to behave during a review.

3   **Review Session Management** The management of the review may need more resource than a normal review. With Zoom it could useful to have two people to manage the process, one to host the meeting and one to take notes. That is in addition to the Chair and Panel who are invitees with no responsibility for managing the process. Some panels are using the recording of the session to make notes from, and the session is managed by one person.

4   **Session Timing** Using a screen for a review is more intense and it's difficult to stay focussed for more than one hour at a time. So give consideration to the timing of panel meetings. Make sure there are breaks for everyone at regular intervals. It may not be possible to manage more than 2 panels a day. And for panel members half a day is likely to work better, so have different panel members for the morning and afternoon sessions.

5   **Site Visits** The virtual site visit needs to be well managed, to be sure the panel is well informed before the review begins. The panel manager taking control of the site visit may be the best way to ensure that. Generally, it is better if the virtual site visit is a joint panel experience with the case officer present to explain key issues. Viewing the site may not take so long but allow plenty of time for panel members to ask questions. Google maps can be used, and photos. Some panels may use VuCity.

6   **Briefing** The Panel Manager and Chair must work as a team to ensure the smooth running of the review, and a prior briefing between them is important. Most panel members will have received briefing information prior to the review. On the day more time may be needed for the briefing in order to ensure panel members have all the information they need for their comments and have time to ask questions. The

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[*] *we are not promoting the use of any particular platform.*

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briefing could be held as a separate meeting, to avoid applicants entering the confidential part of the meeting.

7   **Presentations**   Presentations will usually be done by power point. It is helpful if the presentation is sent to the panel manager one week before the meeting so it can be shared with the panel. Panel managers may want to give guidance to applicants about how to present for a virtual panel. For example: It may be better to have one presenter, being clear about which image is key to the point being made, and to understand which methods of interaction are possible. They need to think about how easy the images are to read. Lots of small text won't be visible to the panel members. Models are sometimes used and can be filmed so that the camera moves around to appreciate all dimensions. Guidance to applicants on the best approach will ensure consistency. During the panel discussion the panel manager could manage which images are being displayed, for greater clarity.

8   **Discussion** The remote review needs a more formal approach by the Chair, who must manage the panel and other participants with great clarity. At the start of the review they should explain how they will organise the discussion, and how they will manage questions. Guidance should be given to panel members and applicants on how to participate in a virtual meeting. Debriefing can be managed as a separate meeting, or ensure that the applicants have left the meeting before the session starts.

9   **Back up** There can be technical glitches so have a back-up plan, which panel members are aware of. If a panel member's connection stops there may be alternative ways for them to participate. Possible using a phone call to connect, or making a written submission that can be sent to the panel manager on the same day.

10   **Benefits** Some unexpected benefits of remote review are emerging, that can be used to encourage applicants to use the panel, and give reassurance that a good quality service continues. It is easier to be flexible about review timing and there is far better panel member availability. The review will have the same quality of panel expertise and the outcome is the same.

11   **Transparency** As with all aspects of Design Review it is important to explain processes and be transparent. As soon as possible Panels need to put information on their websites to explain how they are managing the new process and give reassurance that the process continues, and offers the same quality of service. The information could be an addition to the Terms of Reference, or a separate guide to Remote Review.

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