

NSW State Design Review Panel

Guidelines for Projects Teams

Contents

1. The NSW SDRP program
2. Participants in design review
3. NSW protocols for good design review
4. Site visits
5. Structure of the review session
6. Design advice letter
7. Subsequent review sessions
8. Documents prepared for the review session
9. Documents prepared for the development application

Appendix A

Submission Requirements

This document sets out the requirements for project teams presenting to the NSW State Design Review Panel (SDRP). It should be read in conjunction with the *NSW State Design Review Panel Terms of Reference* (GANSW 2023).

1. The NSW SDRP program

Managed by Government Architect NSW (GANSW), the NSW SDRP program oversees the design review of State significant projects in New South Wales. Under this program, design review is an independent evaluation process in which a panel of design and built environment experts provides design advice on the design quality of the projects.

Projects reviewed by the panel

The panel reviews State significant projects across the state. For information on the types of projects reviewed, see the *NSW State Design Review Panel Terms of Reference* (GANSW 2023). Other types of projects may also be reviewed.

Where review by the SDRP is required, it is included in the Secretary's Environmental Assessment Requirements (SEARs), this includes industry-specific SEARs, or Study Requirements.

Reducing session wait times

The SDRP wait time reduction scheme has introduced new conditions for private projects participating in the pre-lodgement SDRP program. The scheme aims to reduce the wait time for private projects on private land when seeking review through the SDRP.

For private projects on private land the following Capital Investment Value (CIV) thresholds apply for participation in the pre-lodgement SDRP program:

- \$40M: New schools.
- \$75M: Residential development seeking infill affordable housing bonuses.
- \$100M: All other private projects on private land.

Where the project meets the CIV threshold, participation in the pre-lodgement SDRP program is limited to 2 reviews/project.

CIV thresholds and review limit do not apply:

- to stage 1 concept plan applications or other projects seeking significant changes to planning controls
- to any project where review by the SDRP is required by an EPI
- where the SDRP is part of an endorsed alternative to a competitive design process
- to any project in the Bradfield City Centre
- to all projects led by a government agency or on government-owned land.

Private projects that no longer require design review through the SDRP as a result of the above criteria can proceed through the planning process without pre-lodgement SDRP input. Where a private project has not been reviewed by the SDRP, it may be subject to independent design review as part of assessment.

There is no change to competitive design processes where required by an EPI or concept plan.

For residential development seeking infill affordable housing bonuses, GANSW will confirm the requirement for review by the SDRP as part of the mandatory scoping meeting.

Session timing

It is strongly recommended to engage early with the NSW SDRP. This has been demonstrated to deliver better design outcomes and to support more timely assessments.

For private projects on private land, there is a limit of 2 reviews per project. For all other projects, 3 reviews are typically recommended, however this will depend on the scale and complexity of the project.

Where the first review occurs pre-SEARs, subsequent reviews should take place after the SEARs have been issued.

Booking a session

Applications for review by the NSW SDRP are submitted online by the proponent through the NSW Planning Portal. Reviews will be scheduled as close as possible to the requested date.

For private projects on private land, if no sessions are available within 12 weeks of the application, pre-lodgement review by the NSW SDRP is not required.

2. Participants in design review

Design adviser

A GANSW design adviser is appointed to each project to support the design review process. The design adviser's role includes liaising with the proponent, design team and key stakeholders. The design adviser also prepares the pre-briefing part of the review session and drafts the design advice letter.

Panel and chair

Review sessions are typically attended by 4 panel members and a chair, with a minimum of 2 panel members and a chair. For larger and more complex projects additional panel members may be recommended. The composition of the panel is at the discretion of GANSW with selection of panel members determined in response to the project type and scale.

The panel will include an independent council nominee (where there is a nominee and they are able to attend the review session) to provide advice based on a deep understanding of the local government area and awareness of council's concerns.

The chair is the NSW Government Architect, a senior GANSW staff member or a panel member nominated by GANSW.

All panel members are bound by the *NSW State Design Review Panel Terms of Reference* (GANSW 2023), including declaring interests and confidentiality. Panel members are asked to declare any conflicts of interest in accordance with NSW Government guidelines, and each declaration is assessed before the review takes place.

To ensure consistency, build expertise and provide progressive certainty for proponents, the same design adviser, panel and chair will be convened for first and subsequent reviews wherever possible.

Observers

Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure assessment officers and council representatives are invited to attend the review session including pre-briefing and debriefing sessions. The chair may invite additional observers, such as other agency representatives or State Government Design Champions. Any observer may be asked by the chair to brief the panel on specific issues where their input will support the review. Inviting observers and asking them to brief the panel is at the discretion of the chair.

Observers may not participate in the review process other than providing briefing information when invited to by the chair.

Project team

The project team should nominate review session attendees, including:

- design lead – project architect or lead designer who will present the project
- project team – team members who may contribute to the presentation, such as landscape architect, sustainability consultant, planning consultant etc
- proponent or client or their representatives.

All information relating to any project undertaking design review is communicated to all attendees in the strictest confidence.

3. NSW protocols for good design review

All panel sessions, panel members and participants comply with the NSW protocols for good design review. The protocols are set out in the *NSW State Design Review Panel Terms of Reference* (GANSW 2023).

4. Site visits

As projects are located across the state, site visits are not typically organised as part of the NSW SDRP program. A detailed briefing on the site will be provided to the panel by the design adviser at the first review session for any new project, and panel members are welcome to visit sites in their own time if they wish. For larger and more complex projects, GANSW, in consultation with the proponent and assessment officer, may facilitate a site visit for panel members.

5. Structure of the review session

The review session is an opportunity for the design team to present the project to the panel. Most sessions will last approximately 1.5 hours. For larger and more complex projects, such as precincts and linear infrastructure, this may be extended.

Review sessions will typically take place in person, but may be online. Video conferencing facilities are available for those participants who are unable to attend in person. This is facilitated by GANSW.

As a guide, a typical review session comprises:

Pre-briefing – 20 minutes (in private)

Before the project team arrives, the design adviser briefs the panel on the project, providing an overview of the site location, planning context and project brief. The design adviser also highlights any key issues the panel may want to focus on during the review session.

The chair may invite any observers to provide briefing information where their input will support the review, including the assessment officer who can provide detail on planning issues.

Welcome – 5 minutes

When the project team arrives, the chair introduces proceedings and acknowledges Country. The project team is asked to introduce themselves.

Project introduction – 5 minutes

The proponent, client or their representative provides an overview of the project and program, including the brief and design objectives, and any milestones. For subsequent reviews, the introduction includes an update on design development and the program.

Presentation – 20 minutes

The design team presents the project. The presentation should also include input from other key consultants where appropriate, for example Country, landscape or sustainability consultants.

There is no minimum or maximum number of pages or slides, but the time constraint for presentations should be taken into account.

All drawings should be clearly legible when viewed on an LCD screen or projection.

For in-person review sessions, the presentation should be saved as a single file on a USB stick to ensure it can be transferred to the venue laptop.

If a physical model is available, it is recommended to bring it to the session and include it as part of the presentation. Simple massing models through to detailed design models can be very useful in describing projects, supporting informed discussion and review. Where review sessions take place online, photographs of models can be included.

Panel questions – 15 minutes

The chair invites panel members to ask questions for clarification by the project team.

Panel review and summary – 30 minutes

Following questions, the panel reviews the project, with comments and discussion moderated by the chair. All projects are evaluated in a holistic manner with reference to:

- the following objects of the *NSW Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979*:
 - f) to promote the sustainable management of built and cultural heritage (including Aboriginal cultural heritage)*
 - g) to promote good design and amenity of the built environment.*

- *Better Placed – An integrated design policy for the built environment of NSW* (GANSW 2017)
- *Connecting with Country Framework* (GANSW 2023)
- other design guidance relevant to the project or local government area.

After inviting a response from the project team, the chair concludes the review by summarising key points of advice and providing guidance where panel feedback is ambiguous or inconsistent. The summary is intended to ensure that the project team leave with a clear understanding of the advice and next steps.

The project team then leaves the session.

De-briefing – 10 minutes (in private)

The chair and panel confer with the design adviser, assessment officer, council representative, and other observers (if required), to ensure all comments and feedback are captured.

New matters should not arise during this closed session, however, should this occur, they will be noted as such in the design advice letter.

6. Design advice letter

The comments and feedback arising from the review inform the design advice letter. The advice letter is endorsed by the chair and represents the advice of GANSW.

The advice letter does not minute the review session, but rather makes clear which elements of the project are supported and the key design issues that should be addressed.

Before responding to a review session, project teams are encouraged to wait for the advice letter to be issued to ensure design development or changes are responding to the advice of GANSW as recorded in the letter.

The advice letter is distributed to the proponent, project team, assessment officer and panel members within 7 working days of the review session.

7. Subsequent review sessions

Subsequent review sessions provide the opportunity for further design quality improvements, supporting progressive certainty for proponents.

While the first review session is an opportunity to establish the design objectives, constraints and opportunities, key issues, and the project's response to these, subsequent sessions focus on design development and changes made to respond to previous advice.

8. Documents prepared for the review session

Project information form

As part of the application process, the proponent is required to provide project information via the Planning Portal. This covers project and planning information, the brief and design objectives, and a detailed project description. Contact information, including the project team and review session attendees, is also required to be submitted via the Planning Portal.

Design presentation

The draft design presentation must be uploaded to the Planning Portal 5 working days before the review session. It should be as thorough and complete as possible for inclusion in the agenda pack for the review session. The agenda pack, which also includes the project information form, is circulated to the panel to ensure they are prepared for the session and can provide informed advice.

Proponents receive an email from the Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure (via the Planning Portal) informing them of the submission requirements for the draft design presentation.

The final design presentation should be uploaded to the Planning Portal the day before the review for distribution to the panel in case of technical difficulties on the day.

Panel presentation – first review

The first presentation to the panel should clearly articulate the story of the project from analysis to concept development. It should demonstrate how the project responds to the brief, design objectives, context and analysis, and integrates sustainability and cultural heritage. Any project options should be shown, and if there is a preferred option, a clear rationale for its selection should be demonstrated.

Where variations to planning controls are proposed, the presentation should include a comparison between a complying scheme and the proposed scheme, demonstrating benefits and impacts.

(See Appendix A – Submission Requirements.)

Panel presentation – subsequent reviews

Subsequent presentations to the panel should demonstrate design development based on previous advice. Key changes should be clearly identified using comparison views, plans and other appropriate graphic representations. The presentation should also include any drawings or further analysis requested by the panel.

(See Appendix A – Submission Requirements.)

9. Documents prepared for the development application

Design review report

A design review report, prepared by the proponent, is required to be submitted with the development application. The report should identify how the project has responded to the panel's design advice or provide a justification where it has not been able to do so.

The design review report is made publicly available on the Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure Major Projects website during the assessment exhibition period.

Proponents may choose to include advice letters in full in the design review report.

For further information see *NSW State Design Review Panel Terms of Reference* (GANSW 2023).

Appendix A

Submission Requirements

The following submission requirements are applicable to all project types and should be included in the design team's presentation to the panel.

Proponents will be advised of any additional or alternative submission requirements that apply to specific project typologies (for example health projects) or larger and more complex projects (for example precincts).

For all presentations, ensure context (built form and topography) is shown on all drawings.

SDRP 1

- ☐ Site and context analysis including photos
- ☐ Project background information such as brief, key controls etc.
- ☐ Proposed conceptual approach
- ☐ Approach to Indigenous culture and heritage
- ☐ ESD targets
- ☐ Sketch plans, sections (including site sections) & 3D views at scales appropriate to the project type and stage
- ☐ Options where relevant
- ☐ Where variations to planning controls are proposed, drawings showing comparisons between a complying scheme and the proposed scheme, demonstrating benefits and impacts

SDRP 2

- ☐ Updated conceptual response
- ☐ Response to Indigenous culture and heritage
- ☐ ESD strategies
- ☐ Preferred option including clear rationale for selection (where options are provided)
- ☐ Key plans, sections (including site sections) & 3D views at scales appropriate to the project type and stage
- ☐ Landscape plan
- ☐ Shadow diagrams for 21 June 9am-3pm including surrounding properties
- ☐ Response to each item of previous advice through drawings showing before and after comparisons, including plans, sections and 3D views

Subsequent SDRPs where these occur

- ☐ Detailed plans indicating internal layouts and fit-out
- ☐ Detailed building sections & 3D views
- ☐ Whole-of-site sections illustrating topography, indoor/outdoor connection, and surrounding context
- ☐ Detailed Landscape plan indicating existing and new planting, shade structures, plant schedule, materials and finishes
- ☐ ESD resolution including modelling and simulations
- ☐ Incorporation of Indigenous culture and heritage
- ☐ Materials and finishes
- ☐ Response to each item of previous advice through drawings showing before and after comparisons, including plans, sections and 3D views