

LONDON
REVIEW PANEL


Co-Founder
Oru Space

May 2022

Dear 

London Review Panel: Sutton Works, LB Sutton

Please find enclosed the London Review Panel report following the design review of the Sutton Works on the 3rd May 2022. I would like to thank you for your participation in the review and offer ongoing Mayor's Design Advocate support as the scheme's design develops.

Yours sincerely,


Mayor's Design Advocate

cc.

All meeting attendees

Jules Pipe, Deputy Mayor for Planning, Regeneration and Skills

Philip Graham, Executive Director of Good Growth, GLA

Louise Duggan, Head of Regeneration, GLA

LONDON REVIEW PANEL

Report of London Review Panel meeting for Sutton Works, LB Sutton

Tuesday 3rd May 2022

Review held remotely. A site visits took place ahead of the review with a tour and briefings given by the Local Authority, Project and Design Team.

London Review Panel



MDA (Chair)
MDA
MDA

Attendees



London Borough Sutton
Oru Space
Oru Space
Oru Space
Samuel Chisholm Studio
Takero Shimazaki Architects



GLA Regeneration (Project Officer)
GLA Regeneration (Panel Manager)

Report copied to

Jules Pipe
Philip Graham
Louise Duggan

Deputy Mayor for Planning, Regeneration and Skills
GLA Executive Director of Good Growth
GLA Head of Regeneration

Confidentiality and publication

Please note that while schemes not yet in the public domain, for example at a pre-application stage, will be treated as confidential, as a public organisation the GLA is subject to the Freedom of Information Act (FOI) and in the case of an FOI request may be obliged to release project information submitted for review. Review reports will target publication to the London Review Panel webpage six months following the review unless otherwise agreed.

London Review Panel's Views

Summary

The panel commend the team on their ambition for this project which includes plenty of exciting opportunities and challenges. While the scope is huge, the team assembled seem to be well versed in the challenges it poses. The panel are encouraged that this team are not simply approaching this project from a retail perspective. The panel can see the team are committed to introducing many different overlapping programmes to achieve rich and meaningful outcomes for this community. The panel see there are many positive proposals to build on. The panel understand this is an important project for LB Sutton and needs to be delivered successfully.

The project should be more clearly presented with the wider context of the city, the urban experience and high street. The team need to demonstrate the projects interaction more clearly with its immediate context on either side, and on the high street front and neglected rear. The project needs to better address how it will engage with a broad range of users and their different needs. The team should explore the conscious and unconscious barriers to encouraging people into the building. Working with existing buildings is complex and areas such as acoustics need to be carefully designed to avoid issues and additional costs. The project should allow for flex spaces that are messier, with adequate storage and the ability to adapt as users move in and test the layouts. Gaining a real frontage on the high street should be pursued and would greatly benefit the project and its visibility.

The project is a financial challenge and the team need to ensure they have costed and planned to deliver on the key priorities.

- The panel understand the team are planning a phased launch to reduce the cost risks and generate cash flow.
- The panel recommend building in flexibility that can adapt to the changing needs of the users as they move in.
- The current economic climate for the construction industry is challenging and the team need to factor in likely further issues in materials and supply chains to avoid costly time and budget overruns. This should avoid compromises that impact the design vision.
- The team should ensure they have fully costed the furniture as this is a major budget element.

Working with existing buildings of this scale will be a challenge and the team should invest time in their pre-tender estimates.

- The team need to ensure they are fully aware of the restrictions and costs associated with the existing services and structural constraints.
- The team should ensure all basic utility strategies are captured in their costs including approach to existing and new systems needed for water, electricity, ventilation etc.

The panel recommend the team carefully consider the acoustic designs for the different spaces and activities proposed.

- The team should consider the issue of cross talk acoustics across various activity zones, from service, storage, café, and workspace.
- Particular attention needs to be given to sensitive areas for quiet working.
- If acoustics are not fully considered, then this will have an impact on the budget with the introduction of countermeasures such as acoustic baffles and linings. Both increasing cost and environmental impact.
- The proposed bare concrete looks lovely but can be noisy and make it hard to talk on the phone.

The panel advise the team to develop a clear wayfinding strategy to help the various intended user groups move around the huge and complicated building.

- The team should seek to foster the community experience through a branding and graphic design approach developed through active conversations with their target audiences.
- Understanding and experiencing the internal spaces needs to be informed by the operational strategy. This will determine where and how many welcome points, security gateways and staff stations are required.
- There needs to be a wayfinding strategy developed that makes it clear how different user groups navigate through the building. For instance, how will the reception work to direct the public to specific businesses on upper floors.
- The team are advised to consider the time and accessibility requirements to move from the threshold to the most inaccessible part of the building. This will be reflected in the likely dwell times in the café and community spaces close to the threshold compared to the deepest parts of the building.

The panel advise the team to draw the surrounding context into their floor plans to develop their approach to user experience of the internal spaces.

- Current drawings give the impression of accessibility and access to light where this is not the case.
- By drawing in the hard-up context and its restrictions around the existing building the team will be able to better develop their strategies for user internal experiences.
- The panel also encourage the team to use their floor plans to explore furniture layouts, wayfinding, and aesthetic strategies with which to develop the internal user experience.

The panel encourage the team to consider how to make this project meaningfully inclusive in its design and programme.

- The current proposed uses seem quite quiet and clean which can be potentially exclusionary.
- The team are advised to look at codesign and co-authorship with their target audiences including underrepresented demographics in this area.
- The panel suggest there are opportunities to gear training and skills offers towards where there is local need such as the catering industry.
- The panel recommend the team set out how they intend to weave social value outputs into the user services being provided.

- The team need to work hard on ensuring the access and invitation into the building is developed to make it clear who is welcome in these spaces and what amenities are on offer.
- The project risks being a 20-35 age group environment if the team do not consider carefully how different ages will really interact with this building despite the team's positive intentions.
- The panel recommended that more messy spaces could provide space for some experimental areas where more hands-on creative work can find a base. This can act as a magnet for drawing a richer mix of users into the space
- The panel suggest that the team develop opportunities for how the business can act as an incubator for local start-ups.

The panel would highlight the importance of this project's relationship to the high street and more broadly as part of the city.

- This site is one of a wider chain of community asset sites LB Sutton is developing to form key anchors along the high street.
- The panel agree it is critical to get the thresholds from the high street into the building right to provide a clear marker and welcome of the offer inside.
- The current proposals of the building as its own self-contained city are a nice idea but can miss seeing the building as part of the actual city which can isolate the building from its context.
- The panel suggest the team draw out a noli plan figureground with the wider shopping centre, showing not just the shop frontages, but the hinterland around the town centre and the service and movement networks. This will help the team understand how to embed this project in the experience of the city to ensure it is as successful as it can be.

The panel agree that any opportunity to gain a true entrance on the high street would be incredibly valuable to the projects access and visibility.

- The panel advise the team to consider how any new high street frontage might more radically change the approach to the existing building to ensure an optimal layout rather than adapting the unbuilt proposals.
- The panel suggest that while arcades off the high street could be nice, they depend on routes through them to be successful.
- Should the team secure a high street frontage a more public facing use such as the café may be more successful in interacting with the street and drawing in visitors.

The panel encourage the team to explore how to better utilise the buildings high street facing opportunities.

- The current proposals are striking on the outside but do not currently resonate with what happens inside.
- The panel encourage the team to help the buildings frontage to develop more personality to encourage people to want to visit.
- The team are advised to consider the high street frontage as a canvas that can change and reflect the users and uses within the building.

- The panel suggest that Oru's Lordship Lane site is a success based on activation by uses as you can see people as part of the elevation of the building. The current building does not do this, and passers by could mistake it to be part of H&M.
- The panel agree there is some work to be done for people to occupy this façade and this could include occupied oriel windows.
- There is an opportunity for messages and signage, potentially working with H&M on window vinyl or a painted façade.
- The panel agree it was good to see evolution of the façade design and would note that often facades are seen on the high street from the oblique. As such while the current fin designs are good devices for privacy, the team is intending to make the façade more active and visible.
- The panel agree that most people experience the high street from the corners and edges and so the team should explore signage and wayfinding opportunities on exposed tops and corner flank walls.
- The team are encouraged to use the pavement and thresholds in the high street beyond the project red line boundary as well as projecting signage and banners along the high street to help lead people to the project.

The panel agree there is a huge opportunity to take control and activate the external face of the building to Throwley Way.

- The panel strongly encourage the team to grasp the opportunity to activate the only current street frontage to the building.
- The team can explore the benefit of multiple entrances and how they can cater to different uses and users.
- This street frontage as the back of the high street is important and the team can start to civilise this space, turning Throwley Way from a forgotten road to another positive space in the town centre. Adjacent buildings could then follow suit and turn Throwley Way into a well-used street.

The panel encourage the team to safeguard their design ambitions for the rooftop gardens as these are a crucial part of providing a wider offer to the community.

- When the team start to prioritise the cost, they need to consider the outside space as an integral part of the projects delivery objectives and working with Age Concern.
- Often the external spaces are cut when value engineering exercises are needed, and this would be detrimental to the strategic aims of this project if the external spaces are lost.
- A good example of a successful roof terrace delivered with a small budget is the Bootstrap in Dalston.

Next Steps

The panel would welcome the opportunity to further comment on this exciting and aspirational scheme at a future appropriate stage in the project development.