

**LONDON**  
**REVIEW PANEL**

[REDACTED]  
The Earls Court Development Company (ECDC)

May 2022

Dear [REDACTED]

**London Review Panel: Earls Court - Former Exhibition Centre**

Please find enclosed the London Review Panel report following the design review of Earls Court 26 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,

[REDACTED]  
Mayor's Design Advocate (London Review Panel Chair)

[REDACTED]

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  
[REDACTED], Head of Design, ECDC  
[REDACTED] - Development Manager, TfL  
[REDACTED] - Planning Manager, TfL

**LONDON**

**REVIEW PANEL**

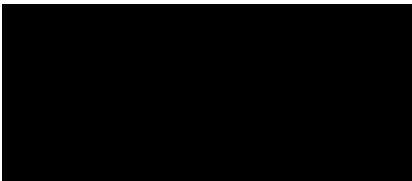
**Report of London Review Panel meeting for Earls Court**

25 May 2025

Review held in person.

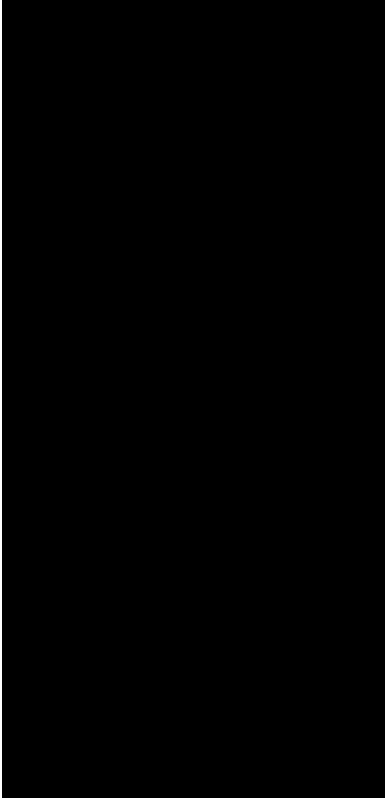
Short Site visit to the Table took place on same day.

**London Review Panel**



MDA  
MDA  
MDA  
MDA (Chair)

**Attendees**



ECDC  
ECDC  
ECDC  
ECDC  
ECDC  
ECDC [part]  
ECDC [part]  
ECDC [part]  
TfL  
TfL  
Hawkins\Brown Architects  
Hawkins\Brown Architects  
Studio Egret West  
Studio Egret West  
GLA Planning  
GLA Planning  
LBHF [part online]  
RBKC [part online]  
GLA Regeneration  
GLA Regeneration

**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  
GLA 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.

### **Project location**

Earls Court – Former Exhibition Centre

### **Presenting team**



Hawkins\Brown Architects  
Hawkins\Brown Architects  
Studio Egret West  
Studio Egret West

### **London Review Panel's Views**

#### **Summary**

Throughout the review the ongoing challenge of reconciling a central destination or show ground proposition with the need to integrate the development back into the city and neighbouring communities was highlighted.

While the panel considered the overall structure of the framework to be sound, the main movement strategy, and the relationship between the buildings, ground floor uses, and the landscape spaces in-between all need further testing and development. In particular the panel recommended further attention to specific key edge and entry locations, adjacent spaces and building types and relationship with existing surrounding buildings, spaces and uses.

The significant increase in scale and massing in relation to nearby context and associated planning risk was noted. In places it was suggested that the massing didn't suit the proposed grain and in particular the building up of a cluster adjacent to Empress State building needs more work. As an alternative to the incremental height changes a more confident approach to height differences was requested, with fewer and distinct datum.

The commitment to genuine community agency was encouraged further with a suggestion to include local representatives in the development of the proposals especially ground floor uses at the edges of the site and the shaping of scheme wide KPIs around social value.

The landscape led approach was welcomed in principle but questioned in practice. Its precise definition was unclear to the panel, and they were concerned it is not relegated to a tagline. Further testing and development are needed especially in the context of the high-density urban character including in relation to the nearby sequence and network of spaces i.e., the nearby cemetery and the nearby garden square.

The panel would like to see further development of the sustainability approach, with consideration of the supply chain (material and construction methodology choices) as part

of meeting life cycle zero carbon ambitions. The panel recognized that specific proposals need not be set in stone at this stage, but a clearer articulation of ambitious targets (qualitative and quantitative) was strongly encouraged.

The panel welcomed the approach to early site activation and suggested that meanwhile uses be proposed as enabling infrastructure for the long term.

The scheme would benefit by looking at the detailed phasing, identifying the most important routes, associated buildings, and locations for longer term cultural infrastructure.

The panel welcomed a mix of uses and users and suggested diversification of tenures welcomed vertical mixing of uses within buildings and requested a real focus on be the treatment of these uses on the ground floor – entry points and the interface with the public realm.

### **Framework overview**

The panel appreciated the significant amount of work and thoughtfulness that went into the presentation and commended the high level of ambition for the scheme. Equally the panel acknowledged the significant challenges to be addressed by ECDC and consultant team. Not least the degree of severance and site inaccessibility.

The panel appreciated the consultant team's understanding of the site's unique architectural history, its industrial past, and its multiple and varied communities of interest. The unique and eccentric nature of the site was acknowledged along with the associated opportunity to deliver something very special in terms of place.

The panel acknowledged that 'the bones of the scheme seem right'; the north-south and east-west route structure is an obvious move to make. Albeit examining the impact of EW connection on neighbouring communities was advised.

Whilst the determination to have a special marking at the confluence of the north south and the east west route was understood, the panel observed that it appears that the scheme may be overly focused on creating the centralised, interior destination in and around the 'Table'.

Whilst the key knuckles that join the site to the rest of the city were flagged up as areas where the design team need to work hard, the presentation didn't focus on this intention fully enough. Focusing on the central interior landscape instead. This tendency was also observed in the massing and orientation of the buildings which appeared to be turning away from the city – or at the very least not exploiting the potential of more responsive relationships to the wider city. In particular the relationship to the West Kensington and Gibbs Green estates will need careful consideration.

A potentially more successful approach would be to recognise the identified entry points to be pieces of city in their own right – with a particular spatial strategy, urban form and set of programmed uses. *[It was noted that more detail on this was offered after the panel had*

*undertaken the review*]. Working in from the edges was suggested as an important part of the phasing strategy, allowing positive transformation (potential modest / interim to start with) at the interface with surrounding communities.

There are several other edge conditions and related aprons that need due attention and further development - working out and illustrating. The St Cuthbert's Church environs for instance have yet to be worked out in any detailed way.

### **Cultural uses**

Significant discussion took place regarding proposed cultural uses – and the panel highlighted the need for these to be radically varied, to be distributed across the site and to reflect the context and requirements of both existing and new communities. The high-end culture building was seen as ok as a use if there was also a more distributed quality in the cultural offer. This is something that could be included as part of the community KPI.

The panel concurred that the Table is a key asset but felt that again the proposals were overly specific for a masterplan framework. Notwithstanding the panel responded to the proposals suggesting that the Table could be treated in a more nuanced way, its relic status, its eccentricity, and uniqueness celebrated; its edges visible rather than being subsumed into the ground plain – interesting though the landscape topography would be as proposed. It was suggested that the Table could more successfully be a contingent and curious participant, the railway tracks being another, in what is a much bigger landscape – and not overwhelmingly the central focus. The table might not be the only thing that is strange and dramatic in this landscape.

The panel suggested thinking about places that work in a less programmed way and can come alive over time – Folkestone was cited as an example – (although different spatially and economically) for its interesting non centred life – and its destinations at the edges.

The panel highlighted the opportunity of the section and cited Emscher Park – the splendour of moving across levels and viewing may provide all the drama that's necessary as opposed to overly programmed uses.

### **Landscape led Masterplan**

The panel welcomed the landscape led approach but asked the consultants to push more on what landscape led means. The panel observed that at the moment it's a little bit generic and unclear what it means in the highly urban setting. Accordingly, the panel requested that a stronger understanding of the experience that local people and visitors will have within this landscape is developed. The functional outcomes of landscape could also be better considered including approaches to air quality, health, soil, carbon, drainage, rooftop growing. Could it be an intense woodland somewhere for instance? Can an understanding of where you can plant trees genuinely inform where you would or wouldn't put buildings?

Neither does the landscape need to be too polite. It's a post-industrial place, there can be more fun with a tall block coming close to the table for instance in amongst a forest.

the ground floor uses and their degree of publicness and the degree to which they will generate activity also requires significant testing. most usefully in relation to the nearby sequence and network of spaces i.e., the nearby cemetery the nearby garden square and wider links to the open space network and the Thames.

The panel recognised the work that had been done to promote the landscape as ecosystem services and welcomed the idea that the landscape can genuinely be used to achieve KPIs around urban cooling and/or air quality for instance. This could help drive a particularly deep ecology and support the ecological corridor connecting to the Thames.

There was significant discussion around the degree to which the landscape and wider offer will feel corporate and/or managed. The panel suggested subtle approaches to wayfinding to avoid a Broadgate experience – i.e., people feeling welcome to be in the space – Granary square was cited, along with the notion of landscape as advanced infrastructure.

### **Parking**

The panel welcomed the very limited approach to parking. A strong intuitive wayfinding system would be important to avoid a campus feel with too much corporate signage.

### **Sustainability**

The panel would like to see further development of the sustainability approach. With this quantum of largely new buildings and the changing energy context there is an opportunity to consider the supply chain and think differently about building. This could be a key aspect of the identity of the scheme. A scheme of this size could move the market.

### **Height and Massing**

The significant increase in scale and massing in relation to nearby context and associated planning risk was noted.

Whilst heights were not challenged the building up of a cluster adjacent to and seemingly in attempt to hide the Empress State building was questioned. The cluster would need to engage more positively with Empress House. The overall diagram of incrementally reaching up to a given height / datum was also questioned. When perhaps a more limited range of datum associated with and particular to each block type could be an alternative approach. The framework could be more adventurous and bolder about height and perhaps calmer elsewhere – as in places the massing doesn't suit the proposed grain. The team was urged to consider how London manages eccentricities in terms of height and proximities between unlike conditions - often and most successfully without apology. A more confident approach to be bold about height differences was requested.

It was also noted that for this quantum of development the potentially mutually beneficial relationship between high density development and open space needs to be very highly calibrated with a more tightly defined structure and interface between the two. Whilst the scale and massing at the fringe of the central landscape was compared to central park it was noted that the space itself is a lot smaller than that. The scale of the space compares to a nearby garden square.

## **Engagement**

The commitment to genuine community agency was well received. The approach of working with the community to determine what type of place this could be was welcomed. The panel recommended a frank conversation with the local community on height to be undertaken as soon as possible. Being clear about the quantum of development that is needed. Without which a sense of distrust could emerge.

The identification of multiple communities was welcomed as was the recognition of the socio-economic circumstances of each and the commitment to undertake differing and varied approaches to engagement to suit each community.

The panel highlighted the advantages of including local representatives - acting on behalf of the wider surrounding demographic - to be part of the steering of the development. And to be participants in workshops with the design team.

The panel appreciated the focus on an equitable city and social responsibility and associated KPIs. It was suggested that the community representatives could be involved in shaping the KPIs around social responsibility and value. Co-produced KPIs would allow intelligent community design review as the development moves forward. The community can act as an assessor, making suggestions on the best way to achieve KPIs.

The panel proposed further testing and strategising for equity at street level. Asking the community what will work in that park – the welcoming nature of granary square (KX) was again cited as a comparator. The granular level of tenure and ground floor uses that people experience as they walk through the site to get to the park will impact how welcome people feel. Each one will need to be thought through with this in mind. For instance, including uses that work for local budgets.

## **Phasing and meanwhile uses**

The panel welcomed the approach to early site activation and suggested that meanwhile uses be proposed as a test or first bit of enabling infrastructure for the long term and to underpin ongoing engagement with local users.

The scheme would benefit by looking at the detailed phasing, identifying the most important route – and where the early and longer-term cultural infrastructure should go. Following which an inherent logic can be developed that associates wider benefits to incremental development and helps identify where to prioritise delivery. Once decided this should inform some of the decisions regarding adjacent blocks – position, use, scale, and massing.

A phasing diagram was suggested with varying degrees of clarity related to delivery trajectory. Fixing key parameters for early phases and public realm, while preserving a degree of flexibility for development later in the timeline was encouraged, recognising the need to embed good principles of delivery.

Kings Cross was further cited as an example where public realm was delivered as advanced infrastructure and inhabited by local people early on. This in turn enabled significant subsequent development to be palatable. KX also stitched into the wider neighbourhoods.

The Olympic Fringe was also cited as an example of where a programme of activities unfolded beyond the 'red line' of the key developments over time. For example, the White Building canalside café and bar which anticipated significant subsequent development.

The potential at Earls Court for some highly precise and surprisingly small things to take place in advance of the main development was highlighted by the panel. Small interventions could have huge buy in. It was recognised that there are already ambitions in this respect.

### **Mix of Uses**

The panel was not concerned with the increase in office space and welcomed a mix of uses and users; tenures and price points to create a rich ecosystem of economic and cultural activity. The panel welcomed vertical mixing of uses within buildings. The panel suggested that the key design issue would be the treatment of these uses on the ground floor and the entry points that interface with the public realm.

### **Future reviews.**

Where possible attempts must be made to coordinate design reviews. There is a real keenness from the London Review Panel to align with local design discussion and to ensure this takes place before the next London Review Panel review. Where possible we should seek to enable an observer from respective panels to attend each review and make review panel notes available across panels. The London review panel respects the principle that design review is best done locally.