

**LONDON**  
**REVIEW PANEL**

[REDACTED]  
The Earls Court Development Company (ECDC)

January 2023

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 18 January 2023. 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)

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

[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**

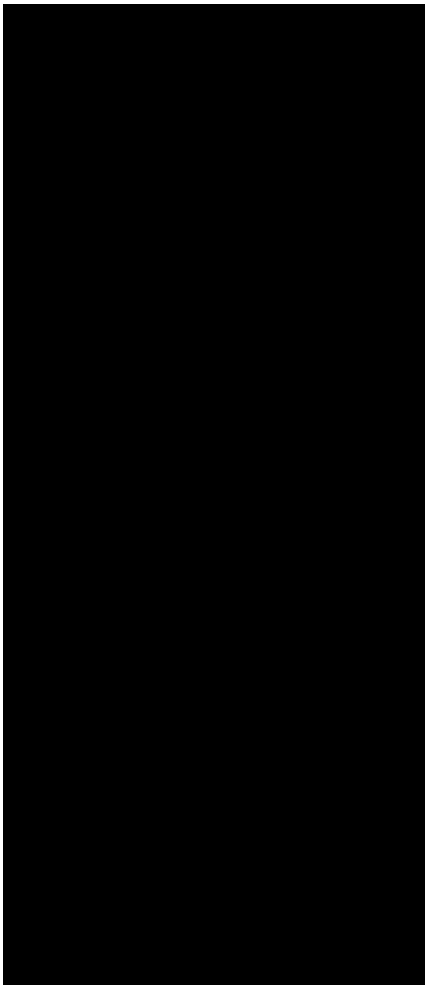
18<sup>th</sup> January 2023 - Review held in person.

**London Review Panel**



Mayors Design Advocate  
Mayors Design Advocate  
Mayors Design Advocate  
Mayors Design Advocate (Chair)

**Attendees**



Earls Court Development Company  
Earls Court Development Company  
Earls Court Development Company  
Earls Court Development Company  
Earls Court Development Company  
Earls Court Development Company  
Earls Court Development Company  
Earls Court Development Company  
Earls Court Development Company  
Greater London Authority Planning  
Greater London Authority Regeneration  
Greater London Authority Regeneration  
Hawkins\Brown Architects  
Hawkins\Brown Architects  
Hoare Lea  
London Borough of Hammersmith & Fulham  
Royal Borough of Kensington & Chelsea (DRP Chair)  
Royal Borough of Kensington & Chelsea  
Royal Borough of Kensington & Chelsea  
Royal Borough of Kensington & Chelsea  
SLA  
Studio Egret West  
Studio Egret West  
Transport for London  
Transport for London

**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

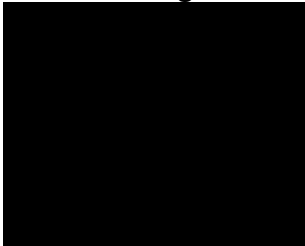
GLA Regeneration

**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**

ECDC (Project Recap)

ECDC (Community Engagement)

Arup (Sustainability)

Studio Egret West (Mixed Use Approach)

SLA (Landscape and People Led Masterplan)

Hawkins\Brown Architects (Height and Massing Evolution)

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

### **Summary**

The panel commend the project team on their comprehensive and enthusiastic presentation of a complex and challenging project. Overall, the scheme is clearer and better resolved since the last review in May 2022, and several of the panel's previous points have been largely addressed, with the understanding that more work and resolution of issues is expected in the coming months.

The team reiterated their priorities for the project. The first was the intention to 'open up the site'. The panel noted that this needs to encompass public access, inclusivity, quality, and a feeling of ownership by and generosity towards the city around it. The second was about the creation of a showground for wonder; the panel continues to encourage the team to explore what this means spatially. The third priority was the ambition to create a better piece of city, and the panel asks the team to define what they are benchmarking this improvement on. The last priority was to address the climate emergency, and the panel would like to see high ambition and innovation combined with a strong focus on implementation.

### **Community Engagement**

- There has been extensive engagement and the ECDC team have done well in establishing community / stakeholder objectives and have laid the groundwork to support the delivery of these. There are clear themes and asks coming through from the engagement; the design team are encouraged to continue addressing them into the next stage of the project as part of an ongoing conversation.
- The inclusion panel represents a genuine approach by ECDC to promote engagement and community-led participatory design. Building on that, the panel suggested considering the establishment of a Community Review Panel (CRP). This could be recruited separately or expanded from the existing panel, and the CRP can play a valuable role in providing consistent community input as the masterplan develops and future development commences.
- The panel thought it was a positive move to include Aisgill Gardens in the early phase of the project and were impressed with the quality of engagement that has been undertaken to develop the programme and design approach. It's encouraging to see the project team working closely with both borough partners and that both boroughs are included in the first phase of the development.
- The panel were surprised that the engagement had not yet highlighted any major concerns from the community (such as access to affordable housing, over-development etc), as would be expected for a project of the scale and of Earls Court. The panel reiterated the importance of early and substantive engagement with the community on key issues including height and massing, and potential impacts of new development and gentrification.

- The panel understood that the team are approaching a ‘masterplan reveal’ moment where the overall masterplan including potential height and massing will be shared with the public and stakeholders. It is strongly suggested that ECDC and the team share key elements of the plan in advance with stakeholders to avoid surprises and a breakdown in trust.
- The next phase of engagement is an opportunity for a shift in gear for the project and fundamental to getting genuine input and participation in developing the design proposals. The panel encouraged the team to engage the community in co-design / co-creation and noted that this can be effective at all scales, from a specific area (e.g Aisgill Gardens) to a macro scale, helping clarify and confirm wider masterplan and regeneration strategies as they come together with spatial planning and design.
- The panel noted the ambitious timeline to get a hybrid planning submission in for 2023 and suggested building in the time to refine proposals to meaningfully integrate the feedback from ongoing community engagement.

### **Sustainability**

- The team has set out an ambitious sustainability strategy for the project, typical of many other comparable major schemes in London. It is clear that both the client and consultant team have the expertise and the commitment to deliver creative sustainable solutions. However, the panel cautioned against allowing a highly ambitious vision to lead to the usual set of ‘best-practice’ solutions.
- The panel would like to see a focus on specific initiatives that could be scaled up to address some of the more difficult challenges (e.g embodied carbon). Learning from other cities who are leading the way was suggested. Examples such as Paris’s commitment to build 50% of public buildings in timber was noted.
- The panel challenged the team to adopt a more leading and influential approach to Net Zero, looking beyond the default approach to offsetting, and pushing the envelope on use of timber, reduced use of concrete, and application of innovations such as on-site manufacture and DFMA, linking to local skills training and employment opportunities.
- It is easy to set positive ambitions around sustainability at this scale but challenging to deliver on all of these. The panel recommend the team pick a selected number of objectives where they can stretch effort, and do better than others, providing inspiration and evidence to the market (and particularly engage the insurance industry to help with market evolution and scaling up).

### **Landscape Led Approach**

- The team presented a diagram showing a pivoting cross going through the centre of the site and connecting it to the wider city. This was a simple articulation of the

wider movement strategy and ambition to open up the site. It offered a clear framework to develop the landscape vision, movement experience, entry points into the site, and wayfinding strategy.

- Within this broader movement framework, the overall open space concept was less clear. A key take-away from the presentation was that the design team was working with a set of landscape typologies; the drawings showed a rich 'collage of typologies' and a welcome attention to site entry areas. The panel liked the idea of a connected network of typologies through the site but questioned the relevance of some the typologies suggested (e.g Boulevard) in a London context.
- The large-scale model in the room (a useful tool) demonstrated the need to provide clear identity to routes and spaces, and reinforced the need to address some fundamental questions: Is the park a destination or a route? What is the experience of the open space(s) when surrounded by tall buildings? How and where do wilder landscapes and more urban spaces interact? How can ground floor spaces and uses contribute to the overall park experience? How does the sequence of open spaces, from site entry points to the centre, work to reinforce the ambition to bring back wonder to the site?
- The proposals reveal a significant interest in the different levels of the site. This condition could be strengthened as a propositional strategy for access, use, environmental quality and identity. For example: lower levels of the buildings could be used to integrate uses and spaces as part of the new urban landscape. A cross-section drawing through the site to show these relationships would be valuable. The panel also suggested a drawing or addition to the large model to show the open spaces in conjunction with building volume (perhaps up to 5 stories) to explore the sense of enclosure to the spaces.
- The panel mourned the loss of the Table! It appears to have been tamed and obscured, losing its eccentricity and peculiarity and distinctive ability to bring some 'wonder' in the park. The panel advise the team to make the Table more present and more visible in helping to navigate and accentuate the topography of the site. The element of wonder requires a degree of surprise and unevenness in spatial relationships; sometimes even suddenly juxtaposed, which the Table can provide. For example: combined with a potentially wilder landscape concept in the centre, a more distinct Table could be like a clearing in the forest.
- The panel were not convinced by the small pavilions at the centre of the park, although agree that there should be lower-height structures in this location. There is an opportunity here to create a bold and confident intervention, using the level changes to accentuate the landscape setting, and introducing uses that require and promote an active frontage.
- The proposed approach to ecological corridors through the site was generally well-received by the panel. The team should carefully consider how proposed habitat / ecology will be impacted by overlapping patterns of use and areas of higher footfall.

The team are encouraged to allow for some wilder and less programmed spaces, particularly along the edges of the site, but also potentially in parts of the central park. The railway corridor typology could be extended to form larger wilder spaces which don't need much sun.

- The team was also encouraged to think further about the distribution of community amenities and sports facilities, potentially even in the central park. The current MUGA is somewhat side-lined, and a more convincing social infrastructure offer would be to string a variety of public amenities through the sequence of spaces.
- The extensive work to bring life to the open spaces is appreciated. However, there is a risk that all spaces are trying to be 'foreground' and there is a balance to strike between the destinations and the 'background' linking spaces. Good examples include the Skansen open air museum in Stockholm and the South Bank in 1951; both have clear foregrounds within background spaces. Also, the 1930 distinct surveyor designed parks with Italianate grottos, bowling greens, moats and rose gardens set into a larger park context (e.g Well Hall Pleasance).
- The panel questioned the number of trees shown in some locations and suggest further work to show what the team can deliver in terms of planting once the cost and difficulty of some of the ground conditions are fully understood and incorporated into the scheme.
- The panel noted the extent of Phase 1 and supports the delivery of each phase in such a way as to establish through connections in that phase. A safe experience for people of using and passing through the site throughout its 20+ years to completion is a key priority and the team is encouraged to consider how this can be achieved at each phase including the consideration of temporary and permanent boundaries between phases (built and unbuilt areas).

### **Height and Massing**

- The panel briefly reviewed the height option models and understand that a preferred height strategy is still a work in progress. The panel generally did not have concerns about the heights proposed and the broad approach to the distribution of height is supported. There is a varied mix of heights showing an evolution from the 'tent' concept seen last time. The presentation suggests the heights have evolved to create a sense of openness from the south towards the park.
- There is an opportunity to vary the common typology of the plinth, midrise shoulder, and tower. The panel cautions against overuse of this typology and suggests introducing some drama by allowing sharper changes in height and bolder forms in selected locations. The panel understands that several architects have been engaged to work up specific areas and is supportive of this approach to bring creative diversity to the new district.

- Communicating height and massing during engagement is not easy; not all audiences understand models and heights, especially when they are also being asked to put this information together with other elements of the proposals. The team should frame conversations on height and massing by providing the right tools, including the use of the large-scale model with proposed massing (not full height obviously, but sufficient to understand the scheme in the third dimension).
- While building heights were not a specific concern, the panel was quite concerned about potential adverse microclimatic impacts on the open spaces. The design team is encouraged to have a robust understanding of sunlight and wind conditions and ensure that this informs the design of spaces (including Aisgill Gardens) and location of amenities, vegetation, and planting.
- The panel advise the team that achieving as many as possible dual aspect homes is a priority for quality of living, for access to views and daylight, and for ventilation and to avoid overheating.

### **Future reviews**

Following on from the previous review, steps have been taken to better coordinate across the three design review panels that are reviewing this project. The London Review Panel is keen to support better alignment with local design discussion. An arrangement has been agreed for the chairs of the London Review Panel and the RBKC Design Review Panel to sit in each other's reviews as observers. Review panel notes will also be made available across both panels. Further efforts will be made to work with LBHF's design review panel in a similar manner. The London review panel respects the principle that design review must reflect a strong local voice.