

LONDON REVIEW PANEL

[REDACTED] (CEO),
The Earls Court Development Company (ECDC)

27th June 2024

Dear [REDACTED]

London Review Panel: Earls Court

Please find enclosed the London Review Panel report following the design review of Earls Court on the 12th June 2024. 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]
[REDACTED]
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 Earls Court Development

Thursday 12th June 2024

A site visit took place ahead of the review with a tour and briefings given by the client team and the Design Team.

London Review Panel

Sowmya Parthasarathy	MDA (Chair)
Daisy Froud	MDA
Adam Khan	MDA

Attendees

Emma Dandy	Earls Court Development Company
Rebecca Hampson	Earls Court Development Company
Richard Foot	Earls Court Development Company

Roger Hawkins	Hawkins\Brown Architects
Marko Neskovic	Hawkins\Brown Architects
David West	Studio Egret West
Allison Piehn	Studio Egret West
Rasmus Astrup	SLA

Eoin Keating	LB Hammersmith and Fulham (LBHF)
Elizabeth Martin	LB Hammersmith and Fulham (LBHF)
Ximena Aguirre	RB Kensington and Chelsea (RBKC)
Genevieve Arblaster-Hulley	RB Kensington and Chelsea (RBKC)
Cecily Chua	RB Kensington and Chelsea (RBKC)
June Taylor	RB Kensington and Chelsea (RBKC)
Grace Jack	GLA Planning – Case Officer
Matt Christie	GLA DM – Team Leader
Shamiso Oneka	GLA Design Unit
Tim Walder	GLA Design Unit
Kerry Branford	GLA Design Unit
Rachel Howsen	GLA Design Unit

Report copied to

Jules Pipe	Deputy Mayor for Planning, Regeneration and Skills
Philip Graham	GLA Executive Director of Good Growth
Louise Duggan	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.

Overview

The applicant team proposes a master plan for the Earls Court area, which has a mixed-use development across the proposed plot. Uses include public realm, residential and commercial land use. The applicant team proposes a 3-phase development plan on the currently vacant plot in Earls Court, beginning with the core residential units and establishing key public walkways, followed by a full build-out in subsequent phases. The applicant team is expected to imminently submit an outline planning application for the full site, with a detailed application for Phase 1.

London Review Panel's Views – A Summary

The London Review Panel has assessed this scheme throughout its design development, conducting a total of six reviews on various topics, and has enjoyed being part of this exemplary design and engagement process. The skill and care of the design and development team is reflected in the overall evolution of the scheme and the design quality that has been achieved for its buildings as well as landscape.

The panel is optimistic about the potential of the scheme to deliver a high-quality new development, well-used public spaces, and a place that is well integrated with its neighbours.

On this final review, the panel reviewed proposals for design codes, heritage impact, architectural quality of the Phase 1 tower elements, and the public realm for the new development at Earls Court.

The extensive work undertaken to develop the design codes was noted, along with the process of testing and refinement of the codes through the work done by the plot architects. The panel commends the robustness of the design codes but emphasises the importance of clarity and readability in the final document to ensure they can be easily understood and applied over time.

The panel believes that the team has successfully distributed density across the masterplan with the location of tall buildings driven by sunlight / daylight studies, microclimate assessments and urban design considerations. The panel also commends the commitment to develop a significant Phase 1 anchored around the main open space.

The panel urges ongoing attention to how residents would experience their new homes and neighbourhoods and allowing that to drive the detailed design of outdoor and indoor spaces,

and communal areas in buildings. The design of the public realm should be reviewed with a lens of nighttime safety, which is particularly pertinent in car-free areas.

The panel praised the tenure-blind materiality approach and the iterative design process involving resident workshops. Some observations were made on the lighting and façade treatments potentially marking out the market rate buildings, but in general, it was felt that the site was capable of harmoniously accommodating a variety of architectural treatments.

Overall, the panel commends the applicant team for integrating feedback from previous reviews and refining the proposal to achieve a high-quality masterplan, landscape, and building design.

A few more specific comments below:

Design Code

- The panel emphasises the need for a clear Design Codes document with the aim of ensuring its intent is well understood and codes are simple to read, interpret and use by future architects. Using techniques such as colour coding so that the ‘must, should, could’ statements are easily communicated was suggested.
- The panel asked if there were performance-based codes for sustainability and utility consumption (energy, water IT etc.) but were informed that these were included in other documents. The panel suggests that documents that contain codes and guidance on sustainability and infrastructure are signposted in the Design Code – so all guidance for future design teams is available in one place.
- The panel suggests that the Phase 1 and 2 design codes (and parameter plans) could be more prescriptive, while the same for Phase 3 could be simpler and more flexible, in order to anticipate future change. In any case, clearly defining the design intent is most important in order to preserve the longevity and relevance of the Design Codes.

Impact on Heritage Assets

- The panel recognises that townscape and heritage were not discussed in this review but expects that the design team will adhere to local authorities' policies and advice on maintaining existing heritage views, and that the scheme's impact on heritage assets will be scrutinised and discussed in other forums.

Architectural Quality of the Tower Elements

- The panel acknowledges the role of resident workshops that have informed the designs, noting that a great degree of refinement has taken place since the previous review. The boldness, clarity, and coherence of the tall buildings cluster and overall distribution of towers is commended.
- The panel supports the tenure-blind designs of both blocks; the Art Deco inspired approach to materials, elevational texture, and detail was commended. The panel felt that the schemes presented demonstrated a varied yet harmonious architectural language across the site.

- There was some discussion on the facade lighting of WB04 which viewed as potentially contradictory to the tenure-blind intention. However, overall, the panel commented that on a site of this scale, there was room for more unusual moments, including the four-storey glazed base and top floors of WB04.
- The panel reserves comment on the interpretation of dual aspect applied to this scheme, pending assessment from the GLA. However, it felt the approach was sensible, based on lessons learned, and would likely result in high-quality outcomes within the dwelling units.

Public Realm: Routes Between Character Areas and Across Borough Boundaries

- The panel highlights the importance of framing well-used spaces within the public realm. Further thought on the programming of meeting spaces, specifically adjacent to buildings will help articulate and improve the quality of these spaces, supporting residents to interact with each other and promoting a stronger sense of community and social well-being.
- The panel encourages the design team to consider the nighttime safety and use of these spaces. Given that the development is car-free, it is crucial to address how the spaces and routes will be experienced at night and how it will be safe for residents. Best practice principles of overlooking, sightlines, and appropriate lighting would all contribute to this objective.

Meanwhile Uses and Cultural Offer

- This item was not covered in detail in the review; however, the panel highlights the importance of interim uses and cultural offerings in the development plan, from initial phases onwards.
- The panel commends the decision to create a separate community hall whose operation is independent of any residential building. As a piece of infrastructure, it offers good space for social life and, and as its not perceived to be 'owned' by a single building or community of residents, will function well as a more inclusive and welcoming venue.

Future reviews

This report concludes the six design reviews of this scheme conducted by the London Review Panel.