

LONDON
REVIEW PANEL

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Regeneration, Property and Planning

London Borough of Redbridge
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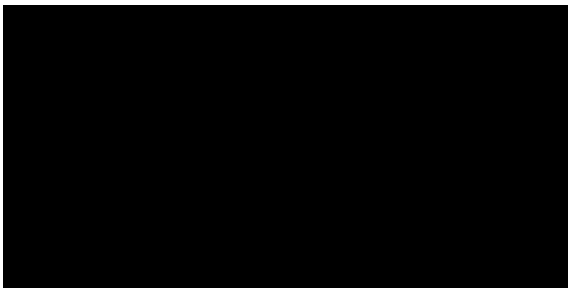
8th November 2018

Dear ██████████

London Review Panel: The Spark, Ilford

Please find enclosed the London Review Panel report following the panel assessment of the London Borough of Redbridge proposals for The Spark, Ilford on 4th October 2018. On behalf of the panel, I would like to thank you for your participation in the review and reiterate the panel's enthusiasm to remain involved in a supportive capacity as the scheme's design develops.

Yours sincerely,



Mayor's Design Advocate

cc.

All meeting attendees plus

Jules Pipe, Deputy Mayor for Planning, Regeneration and Skills

Lucy Owen, Executive Director of Development, Enterprise and Environment, GLA

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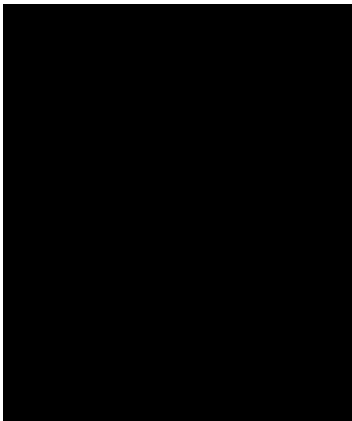
Report of London Review Panel meeting
The Spark, Ilford

04 October 2018
Redbridge Town Hall, 128-142 High Road, Ilford, IG1 1DD

Panel

 (Chair)

Attendees



LB Redbridge
GLA
Interrobang
Mercato Metropolitano
Mercato Metropolitano
Mercato Metropolitano
Space
HAT Projects
Things Made Public CIC
Things Made Public CIC
WSMS Studio
Salvation Army

Apologies



MDA
GLA (panel manager)
GLA

Report copied to

All attendees
Lucy Owen
Jules Pipe

GLA
Deputy Mayor for Planning, Regeneration and Skills

Background

The Spark will kick-start regeneration of the Cultural Quarter in the heart of Ilford town centre. A series of dated and disconnected spaces will be transformed into a vibrant cultural offer focusing on art, technology and food through the re-modelling of the iconic grade II listed Town Hall building and other Council under-utilised assets providing active spaces for businesses and communities.

The Spark Ilford sits at the heart of the borough's ambition to create a new Cultural Quarter within Ilford; focused around the grade II listed Town Hall building and building on the town centre's existing strengths which include a theatre, cinema and library. Initially running for five years, the project will inform, and shape development of the longer term Cultural Quarter as identified in the *Regenerating Ilford: Delivery Prospectus* and boost activity in the town centre during the day and evening, supporting cafes and restaurants and offering a variety of entertainment and performance spaces.

The project is comprised of four interconnected elements;

- Refurbishment of the Grade II listed town hall as artist workspace
- Refurbishment of Janice Mews for creative workspace
- Creation of a temporary covered market on the council owned car park to the rear of the town hall
- Fit out of the ground floor workshop unit within the new Salvation Army Hostel

Context

Ilford is the main urban centre of the London Borough of Redbridge and is growth centre of the borough. There are currently an increasing number of residential led regeneration projects planned in or near the town centre which will change the fabric and long-term demographics of the area. The council is investing in public realm improvements in the town centre in and around the location of The Spark project. However, the wards in Ilford are amongst the 20% most deprived in London. Ilford is marked by a low wage economy, high number of start-ups with an unfortunately high proportion of failures, combined with low quality and relatively high cost office accommodation, not suited to supporting growing start-up businesses. Ilford Town Centre has a lack of social and cultural infrastructure providing a very limited evening offer that is poorly integrated into the wider town centre economy.

Summary

The London Review Panel (LRP) think that The Spark, Ilford is a commendable and ambitious project, where the range of component parts address the local need for a more resilient local cultural offer and kick start the night time economy in Ilford. The panel noted that this project could be a 'game changer' for the regeneration of Ilford. The panel recognise that the project is constrained by its modest budget, ambitious programme and the short term, meanwhile approach that disincentivises substantial investment by providers and think it would be valuable to extend the length of the project.

LRP support the aims of the project to provide an evidence base to help Redbridge Council demand more active ground floor uses for future development. However, the panel think that the project could inform a more specific and detailed local plan/framework where the lessons learned from this project are reflected in local policy and planning decisions. Considering that The Ilford Strategy identifies the town centre for 6000 new and homes and 3000 new jobs, The Spark is critical to informing that future development.

LRP applaud the work that the project team has done thus far in developing a varied and interesting range of programmes as part of The Spark, Ilford. The panel thought it was commendable to curate a project that engages a wide range of sectors within the economy. The panel recognise that each of the project elements are well considered and would now urge the project team to focus on improving the relationships between the different projects both physically through the public realms and through the programming and offer of the different programmes.

The panel are keen that the social value and economic outputs that form the core ambitions of the project are met both during the meanwhile use of The Spark and in the future whilst sites come forward.

Public Realm

LRP have some concerns over the quality of the public realm between the different projects that constitute The Spark and suggest public realm is considered as key part of the project. There needs to be a focus on Chadwick Road and how the public realm interacts with the Salvation Army Recycle workshop and Mercato Ilford as well as how those two projects interact with each other. The existing public realm improvements stop just before The Spark site and thus the panel is concerned that it will restrict people from accessing The Spark site from the High Road. The Panel welcomes long term plans to improve the public realm of Chadwick Road and although these are due to be completed after the 5 years of The Spark project, remedial works should be considered for that five-year period.

As identified by the project team the servicing of the different elements of the project is a challenge and the panel welcome the initial proposals looking at resolving the issues. The panel are interested in how people will travel to the site and recommend that the project team include cycle parking within the project masterplan and suggested that one consolidated place would be the preferred option.

Recommendation

Redbridge Council appoint one of the design teams to include the public realm of the wider project into their scope of works. The panel suggest that the collective needs of the projects will be linked through the public realm and is therefore critical to focus on the design and programming of the public realm.

Curating the Spark

LRP understand that the success of The Spark will be in part due to how the range of projects would together deliver the range of outputs required. The panel suggest that the project team consider the dynamic between the different providers. Specifically, the link between the food and beverage micro-businesses planned at Janice Mews and Mercato Ilford. The panel raised concerns that unless the relationship between the two programmes is complimentary consumers might choose one option instead of engaging with the two offers. The panel raise concern that whilst food and beverage is a positive sector for Things Made Public to focus on, with Mercato Ilford neighbouring their project, it would be sensible for an alternative option to be worked up in case food and beverage isn't viable on the site. LRP also question the practical considerations of having a potentially loud social space behind the town hall artist workspace, highlighting that any potential negative impact should be mitigated.

The LRP recommend that The Spark project is considered and used to support the wider cultural strategy of Ilford Town Centre. The panel understand that Redbridge Council are currently in the process of recruiting for cultural strategy programme manager role and welcome that post being in place during the project.

Recommendations

The panel recommend that the different elements of The Spark, and potentially wider cultural offer neighbouring the sites, have a collective online presence. LRP suggest that this work will help the different programmes and activities to collectively encourage connections between users of the spaces.

Long Term Strategy

Whilst the Spark project is a five year meanwhile programme, the panel note the potential for the project to inform longer term planning of Ilford Town Centre and encourage the council to have more ambition for the project in this regard. The panel understand the unique challenges to developing in Ilford however there is a concern that there isn't a more detailed local masterplan of Ilford Town Centre that this project sits within. The panel is concerned that without a more explicit plan for the long-term strategy of Ilford, the potential benefits of the project will be meanwhile along with the physical spaces.

LRP raise a concern on the length of the meanwhile programme for the sites. The panel recognised that Mercato Metropolitano and the Salvation Army were developing projects that allowed their assets and investments to be deployed to another site. However, the Town Hall and Janice Mews elements were projects where the investment could not go anywhere and therefore there was a clear implication on the ability for Things Made Public and Space to invest in the project to secure the potential social value and economic outputs for the long term.

Recommendations

The panel recommended that Redbridge council should consider extending the length use meanwhile leases, with priority to the Town Hall and Janice Mews projects with the aim of providing more security to tenants and value for money for funding organisations.

The panel recommended that Redbridge Council use the evidence base gathered from the project to show that a cultural offer works in Ilford and therefore have a long-term plan that is more explicit about what the council wants on these sites in the future.

Public Engagement

LRP welcome the project team's implementation of a community engagement plan and noted that some of the service providers had started to identify and engage with specific community organisations to help them refine the offer and activities taking place on their sites. The panel highlight that the success of the projects will be dependent on the providers curating and hosting events and the outreach work that the providers will host. The panel raise a question to project team regarding how they are planning to communicate all the offers and elements of The Spark to the wider public.

LRP are encouraged by the project team's commitment to public engagement and their track record of delivering similar engagement methods on other projects. The panel question the project team about the long-term effect of the engagement and how do they meet the expectations raised from the engagement by the local community in future development of the site.

Next steps

The panel recommend approval of funding for the proposals, subject to the detailed issues above being addressed in collaboration with GLA and local planning authority officers.