

LONDON
REVIEW PANEL

[REDACTED]
Project Manager
Economic Development Team Leader
Islington Town Hall
Upper St Islington
London
N1 2UD

February 2020

Dear [REDACTED]

London Review Panel: Inclusive Growth in Finsbury Park

Please find enclosed the London Review Panel report following the design review of the proposals for Inclusive Growth in Finsbury Park on 12th February 2020. 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

cc.

All meeting attendees

Jules Pipe, Deputy Mayor for Planning, Regeneration and Skills

Debbie Jackson, Executive Director of Development, Enterprise and Environment, GLA

[REDACTED], Head of Regeneration, GLA

LONDON
REVIEW PANEL

**Report of London Review Panel meeting
Inclusive Growth in Finsbury Park**

Wednesday 12th February 2020

Review held at: 48 Seven Sisters Road, London N7 6AA

London Review Panel

[Redacted] MDA
[Redacted] MDA

Attendees

[Redacted] London Borough of Islington Council (LB Islington)
[Redacted] LB Islington
[Redacted] LB Islington
[Redacted] LB Islington
[Redacted] LB Islington
[Redacted] LB Islington
[Redacted] LB Islington
[Redacted] Fashion Enter
[Redacted] Fashion Enter
[Redacted] Holloway Neighbourhood Group
[Redacted] Studio Partington
[Redacted] Ingleton Wood
[Redacted] Studio Weave
[Redacted] Studio Weave
[Redacted] GLA Regeneration
[Redacted] GLA Regeneration
[Redacted] GLA Regeneration

Apologies / report copied to

[Redacted] GLA Regeneration

Report copied to

Jules Pipe Deputy Mayor for Planning, Regeneration and Skills
Debbie Jackson GLA
[Redacted] GLA

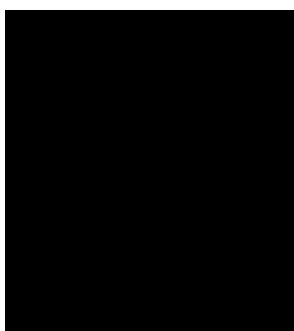
Confidentiality

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.

Project locations (*referred to as*)

Former Garages, *Durham Road*, Andover Estate
113-115 *Fonthill Road*
48 *Seven Sisters Road*

Presenting team



LB Islington
LB Islington
LB Islington
LB Islington
Fashion Enter
Holloway Neighbourhood Group
Studio Partington
Studio Weave

LB Islington introduction

Representatives from LB Islington set out the context for the project, identifying the deprivation imbalance across the borough and communicating the council's commitment to an inclusive economy. The provision of genuinely affordable workspaces which support new local business start-ups and employment opportunities for local residents were emphasised as council priorities. The Panel heard how the project origins resulted from an extensive outreach and engagement process, the reach and breadth of which involved 19 council departments and multiple community groups.

LB Islington ensured the commissioning process put a significant focus on social value, asking providers to deliver social value outcomes such as employment, skills and apprenticeship training for local people. The project looks to support existing clusters of activity; the long-established fashion and garment cluster on Fonthill Road, Wells Terrace and Seven Sisters Road, and the emerging social tech or tech-for-good sector.

Affordable workspace providers introduction

Representatives from the various affordable workspace providers gave a detailed background to their organisations and their involvement in the project to date. Fashion Enter, who run the fashion retail and haberdashery unit at Fonthill Road and who will manage the textile workspace studios at Durham Road, described the social enterprise's vision for a circular economy. The emphasis on technical skills and learning and development within the fashion and textiles industry was detailed, along with the future ambition of e-commerce. Holloway Neighbourhood Group (HNG), an experienced charity who promote community development, engagement and partnership work in the Finsbury Park area, communicated how the Seven Sisters Road unit will be managed, and defined the support offer available through their organisation. HNG also depicted the involvement of Jubba; a youth led organisation whose mission is to improve the quality of life and life chances of young people within the community by empowering them with skills, opportunities

and a collective voice. Jubba will take the ground floor of the Seven Sisters Road unit, with HNG occupying an area of the first floor and also managing the whole building.

London Review Panel's views

Summary

The London Review Panel commend this admirable set of affordable workplace initiatives and wish the team well in the project delivery stage. The Panel offer thanks to the team for the clarity of the presentation and praise the project for the level of involvement from end users. The overall vision for the project is fully supported by the Panel, who view it as a fitting use of GLA funding.

The Panel urge caution navigating the next stages of the project to ensure the tight budget is managed effectively and that working to the defined project programme does not impede the quality of the finalised designs. The process of budget alignment and refinement of the designs may require more time in order to maximise the input from the talented design teams. The Panel were unable to offer further insight or commentary regarding budget management as a detailed cost plan was not presented at this stage.

The Panel acknowledge the GLA as active funders offering further guidance and advocate the use of both the Special Assistance Team and MDAs as design work progresses.

Communication & Evaluation

- The Panel were impressed with the methods of community engagement and outreach conducted by LB Islington, noting how the project demonstrates evolving best practice in regard to its experimentation.
- The team is encouraged to consider ways in which this project can be monitored, evaluated and recorded so this important work can be communicated and evidenced effectively.
- The Panel advocate using the creative skills of the design teams to record this celebratory moment of the project, acknowledging the act of creating a space together as a community and forming something bigger than the sum of its parts.
- The Panel queried who the project is trying to communicate with and noted some mixed messaging in terms of connecting to a target audience. The team are encouraged to consider the different stakeholders and priorities, and what success looks like to all parties. The Panel suggest that the best promotion of value of the project will be from its own success. The local community and those set to use the affordable workspaces should be central to this.
- The proposed use of plaques in each project location, detailing the benefactors of each venue was flagged by the Panel as a tribute which forefronts the organisations involved in the project rather than focus of the project; the local community and the project beneficiaries.
- The Panel suggest the use of the LB Islington branding and colour palette would also detract from the essence and ethos of the project. The project team are urged to consider who and what is being commemorated and what the messaging should promote. The Panel gave much emphasis to the importance of offering an inclusive and participatory welcome to the community.
- The Panel note the small costs of the plaques could make a big difference to the tight project budget- the sum of £100 could help fund how the frontage of the workspaces are dressed and treated.

Budget & Cost Management

- The Panel welcome the imminent involvement of a quantity surveyor and view it as imperative that the QS works very closely with the designers to maximise the impact and value of the project.
- The Panel queried what the financial status of the three project strands were. Budgets for each venue were given but no indication of accurate costs were presented.
- If value engineering is required on the schemes, the Panel advise that the architect is best placed to undertake this task.
- The Panel recommend that the design team focus on getting the fundamental infrastructure of a workspace right, such as adequate daylight, spatial quality and ventilation.
- The Panel queried if there are ways in which to reallocate funding to maximise opportunity across the three venues.
- The role of the QS will be key in optimising the spaces from which delivery will happen. To maximise effectiveness of this work the QS will need comprehensive budget information from LB Islington.

Public Realm & Visual Connections

- The Panel consider the interface of 'shopfront' and the street as a central element of the project. As design work continues, the Panel would encourage a greater consideration of how each venue interacts with the street and how active frontages can be realised.
- The design teams are urged to consider how the public realm could be extended across all venues. Exploring ways in which to make the perimeter of each workspace expressive and interesting would benefit the project, signalling the entrepreneurship and creativity of the workspace users.
- The Panel were interested in the creation of a deep threshold zone at Seven Sisters Road and view this as a robust extension of the public realm into the building. Ensuring this space is as open and accessible as possible will be key to its success.
- The window dressing of each venue was noted by the Panel as a way to address the street and communicate the activities within to passers-by.
- The Panel suggest training workshops in visual merchandising would be a useful expansion of learning. The Panel identified a potential opportunity to utilise the creative capacity at the nearby City & Islington College to anchor access opportunities; perhaps in collaboration with Central St. Martin's, hosting a workshop in how to express the work visually.
- The Panel offer TinType gallery on Essex Road as an interesting project precedent, where an annual film festival is held; films are back-projected onto the shopfront windows, animating the frontage and facilitating additional footfall. Projecting information, film and lights would be a flexible and useful tool in animating the spaces.
- The opportunity exists to specify adaptable display methods, particularly at Durham Road, which would create intentional and purposeful opportunities for display. Allowing room for spontaneity or adaption for future use would be beneficial to the schemes.
- Some concerns were raised by the Panel about the proposed use of digital display screens, which could risk repetition and boredom without careful management and frequent updates.
- Responding to the idea that case studies or profiles of existing workspace users could be broadcast on the digital screens, the Panel urged caution in not memorialising the stories, rather keeping the spaces fluid and allowing room for growth.
- The Panel observe that the visuals produced for the Durham Road scheme could be improved by including people who are already working with the organisation. Building upon the engagement stage through inclusion in the proposals would be a positive addition to the work.

Identity & Connectivity

- The Panel observe that a commonality should be present across the schemes, whilst retaining a sense of uniqueness and identity to the differing spaces. A visual linkage should be most prominent between the retail unit at Fonthill Road and the workshop spaces at Durham Road.
- The Durham Road scheme is acknowledged to be part of a wider regeneration plan; however the Panel advise that it should have its own presence and identity rather than viewed solely as part of the housing estate.
- The Panel note the purposeful separation of residents and users of the workspace at Durham Road as regretful, suggesting this could be a consideration for the future once in use.
- The aesthetic of the workspace at Durham Road was commended by the Panel as being a professional environment in which to be taken seriously. The vibrancy and animation of the space will come from its users and their fashion creations.
- The idea of entrepreneurship could be integrated throughout the schemes, giving a sense of collaboration and connections rather than singular workspaces.
- Increasing the depth of frontage at Durham Road would offer a commonality with the other venues and would also facilitate display, utilising the windows and the spaces beyond as a means to communicate and connect with the local community.
- The proposed display case to the front of the Seven Sisters Road unit requires ongoing thought, curation and management to dress and style appropriately. For maximum impact the Panel suggested a motif that is an installation in itself, to animate the space and entice passers-by. A mirrored ceiling is one example given which would animate and reflect light into the space.
- The work of Dutch designer, Petra Blaisse was noted by the Panel as an interesting way to provide privacy and acoustic separation. Using textiles as architecture would be appropriate for this project given the nature of one of its key tenants; Fashion Enter.

Co-design & Authorship

- For the Seven Sisters Road unit, the Panel queried if the feel of the spaces had been articulated and posed the 'three-word challenge' to be included in any co-design workshops with young people; what are the three words this space should be?
- The Panel recommend that the QS attend any design conversations and workshops with young people, so they are able to share the tools and reality of creating the space. The Panel advised money should be ringfenced to allow for this design process and to ensure the resulting designs are executed.
- The Panel noted how authorship and ownership of the Seven Sisters unit is incredibly important, advocating young people to be involved in both the conception and delivery of the space.
- Expanding the outreach and training programme to invite young people to be part of the delivery stage, working with or shadowing contractors, and exceptional craftsmen and designers would be valuable.