

LONDON
REVIEW PANEL



East End Women's Museum

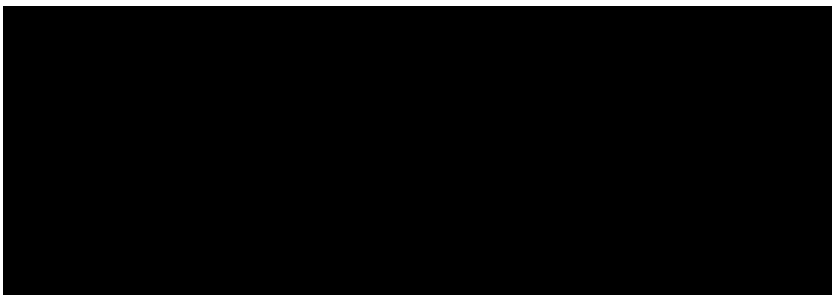
September 2021

Dear 

London Review Panel: East End Women's Museum, LB Barking & Dagenham

Please find enclosed the London Review Panel report following the design review of the East End Women's Museum on the 9th September 2021. 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,



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

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**Report of London Review Panel meeting
East End Women's Museum, LB Barking & Dagenham**

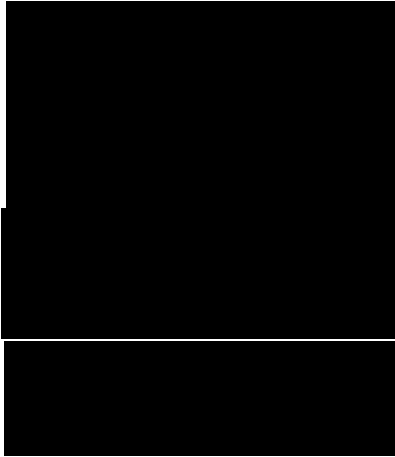
Thursday 9th September 2021
Review held remotely

London Review Panel



MDA (Chair)
MDA
MDA

Attendees



East End Women's Museum
East End Women's Museum
Manalo and White
Manalo and White
Through and Around

LB Barking & Dagenham
LB Barking & Dagenham

GLA Regeneration (Project Officer)
GLA Regeneration (Panel Manager)

Report copied to

Jules Pipe	Deputy Mayor for Planning, Regeneration and Skills
Philip Graham	GLA
Louise Duggan	GLA

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

East End Women's Museum

Presenting team



East End Women's Museum
Manalo and White
Through and Around

Scene Setting

Through and Around provided the context for this project. The East End Women's Museum began as a grass roots protest the Jack the Ripper Museum, developing from a pop-up to a large social media platform. As well as there being no other dedicated women's museums in England, the team highlighted the key deficits in representation of women in all spheres of public life including political, economic and cultural positions and recognition. Most of the project team are women, and the contractor team is also intended to be women focused.

The museum is involved in hosting and participating in many events including with the Mayor's Commission for Diversity in the Public Realm. The mission of the museum is to provide a representation of East London women working through research, programmes and partnerships to tell their stories. Target audiences include residents, cultural tourists, learners and advocates. The team anticipates visitor numbers to be in the range of 11,000-13,000 per annum.

Design Team presentation

Manalo and White presented the project details. The new museum will focus on interactivity and the involvement of and impact on the local community as opposed to a more traditional museum emphasis on display of objects. The exhibitions will seek to rebalance the disparity between women's and men's narratives.

The museum will occupy a small 140 sqm shell and core unit on the ground floor of a new build brick building. It is a shop front commercial unit with extensive glazing and faces onto a new paved public realm. Its sits to the west of the open green spaces of Barking Abbey Grounds, to the east of which is access to Barking Town centre. The team acknowledges more work needs to be done to improve visibility to the site from the town centre.

Internally the space has been developed as three key areas, a multi-purpose gallery event space, a long activity space with a narrow table and exhibition wall, and a quiet space for staff, filming and back of house. Due to the limited footprint all spaces are working hard and there is a focus on combining storage and exhibition space where possible. Within the activity space a central tea point is proposed to sit within the display wall. Material and detail choices are intended to provide a robust and sustainable system that will last and can be adapted and reused. A warm colour palette is proposed to include pink welsh floor tiles and timber finishes, and this has been robustly costed for within this project stage. The internal designs aim to embrace a domesticity with curtains and plants proposed. Accessibility has been a key design driver with plans developed to ensure free movement and sightlines for all eye levels, including passive views from the street.

The team plan to introduce new double doors to the project room to allow natural gathering points to allow movement into either the gallery space or the project room. Furniture has been designed to be assembled in a variety of layouts, moved and assembled.

The women-led design team is also looking to procure the project with women in construction to hold contractors to account on representation. There are options for women-led contractors or individuals. The team confirmed there had been a significant amount of engagement work undertaken to develop the brief and project to date.

London Review Panel's Views

Summary

The panel commend the team on their strong design, coherent brief for the users and are confident this will be delivered well. There is evidence of the thorough and meaningful engagement work in developing the brief. The panel agree that there should be more emphasis on external presence, thresholds and sense of public welcome. Additional development should be considered on the access and signalling from Barking town centre to announce and celebrate its presence. The panel encourage the team to explore how the spaces are viewed from the street, utilising its large glazed shopfront as an engaging way to advertise its presence. The panel suggest that an emphasis of flexibility in the detailing of the displays and storage systems will support the museum in the programme changes without incurring cost. The location the museum sits within is new and will evolve over time, and the museum has potential to influence this environment over time.

The panel advise the team to develop the threshold and public welcome from street to internal spaces.

- The panel agrees this plays an important role in inviting people into the museum spaces and can be used to send out signals to welcome a wider range of user groups.
- The panel recommend the team soften the threshold between the public realm and internal spaces. This could include small details such as the kind of door handles and street furniture inviting people to dwell and to blur the building edge.
- The immediate context is a newly completed public realm around the new build development and the panel suggest the teamwork with the management company in occupying and animating the space to extend the museums reach and welcome. This is an opportunity for EEWm to stamp their ownership and presence in this emerging neighbourhood.
- The panel advise the team to ensure the space signals to the street that though it is not a retail or commercial space, it is for all and free to use. Given that it is in a ground floor unit in a new build there will be assumptions about its use from the public that will need clarifying.
- The panel suggest there are lessons the team could learn from retail in the language and social cues used to attract people from the street and make the public comfortable with crossing the thresholds. The panel suggest this could include a small retail element such as selling books, zines etc., or making the refreshment offer seem more accessible from the street.

- The panel suggested the School of Life as an interesting example of a space that successfully addresses thresholds and public welcome, drawing on the language of retail.
- The panel encourage the team to maximise the window for displays and graphics to attract people in through content, remove barriers to entry and advertise what activities are happening inside.
- The panel believe the team can let the project test the points of entry in relation to the proposed double doors. It may be after a period of testing this is the best solution for the lived experience of the museum, or that the existing separate doors provide a suitable solution.

The panel encourage the team develop strategies to ensure a presence is felt in the town centre.

- The panel agree the visibility of the museums location and offer needs to be made clear in the town centre, using signage and graphics.
- A strong wayfinding strategy is needed to make the museum easier to navigate to and the panel understand the team are working with LB Barking & Dagenham on this.
- The panel suggest that as the museum started as a digital archive which now has a physical space that this can provide clues to how to be a presence and indicate where the museum is and what it is about.

The panel suggest the team continue to develop the display and storage strategies to allow for flexibility, robustness and a cost-effective approach to the fixed joinery.

- The panel agree that flexibility of use over time should inform the selection of mounting systems and details. The angle of the panels, choice of materials and specification of supports will have implications on future cost and maintenance as well as limit the curatorial choices.
- The panel suggests the team consider reducing the amount of hard fixings and inhabiting shelves and panels like a library.
- The panel suggested some areas of wall may have less fixed joinery to allow for more flex as other needs such as projections, vinyl graphics and storage need accommodating.
- The panel agreed that some lenders of collections may have concerns about display cabinets moving once installed and this may impact the range of partners willing to share objects.
- The panel recommend the team avoid exhibitions that require repainting and patching walls, hard fixings into walls and printing that will take money away from the key costs for the museum such as funding key staff and activities.

The panel agreed that a food and drink offer can be a great anchor around which the museums activities can gravitate but questioned its size and location.

- The panel suggest the team reconsider the decision to have the tea point in such a central space along the activity spaces exhibition wall.
- The panel agree a tea point could be a powerful statement and a way of welcoming people into the museum. This could have more of an external presence such as a coffee cart to help blur the boundaries between museum and public realm.

- The panel advise that if the food and drink offer was to remain internal within the activity space, it could build on the idea of a shared table with community meals and use the quiet space for a more extensive kitchen/serving facilities.

The panel recommend the team explore the museums balance between a family space and adult space with clarity of its approach to children and young people.

- The panel agree there is a balance to maintain between the museums offer to families and adult users. There are a lot of families in the local area with the potential for linkages between the museum and schools and children and young people's groups.
- The panel suggest this balance between different user and age groups would be achieved through the flexibility of the programmed calendar of activity. In this way the furniture and tables can adjust to the differing needs of different groups, providing perhaps more table-based activities for children, and more seating for talks and discussion groups.
- The panel recommend a consideration of older children and young adults should be undertaken as often this group are not catered for, falling between the gaps of spaces aimed at children and adults. How to make them feel invited, welcome and safe with an offer that appeals will be important to reaching all those EEWM aspires to.
- A useful reference suggested was the Tech Commons, part of the New York historical society which uses library and digital tools for teenagers to tell stories and share perspectives.

The panel understand the team are looking to assemble a women-led construction team.

- The panel were highly supportive of the team's ambition to assemble a women-led construction team
- The panel suggested the team look to the Building Crafts College based in Stratford and could be a useful organisation to engage with.
- The team suggested there were opportunities to discuss the Mayoral construction academy and how it could support the project. GLA officers to follow up.

Next Steps

The panel would welcome the opportunity to further comment on this exciting and aspirational scheme at a future appropriate stage in the project development.