

LONDON
REVIEW PANEL

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Covent Garden Market Authority
Food Exchange
New Covent Garden Market
London
SW8 5EL

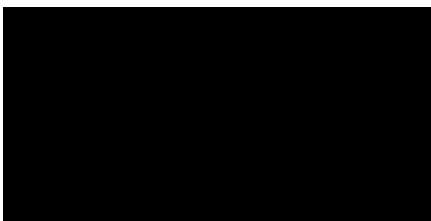
9th January 2019

Dear ██████████

London Review Panel: Mission Kitchen at the Food Exchange, New Covent Garden Market

Please find enclosed the London Review Panel report following the review of Mission Kitchen at the Food Exchange, New Covent Garden Market on 14th November 2018. On behalf of the panel, I would like to thank you for your participation in the review and offer the panel's ongoing support as the project develops.

Yours sincerely,



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

Summary

The London Review Panel (LRP) think that the proposals for Mission Kitchen facility within the Food Exchange at New Covent Garden Market is an exciting project with huge potential to positively impact the food sector in London, the opportunities of existing and new businesses and traders and the local communities surrounding the site. The project team presented an exciting vision for London's primary fruit, vegetable and flower market, highlighting the strategic significance of the site and the project. The team also communicated the underpinning ethos of the project to promote innovative food cultures including ethical production, innovation in healthy consumption and celebrating London's diversity of food cultures and cuisines through relevant food skills, training, entrepreneurship and business support. However, the panel questioned whether more could be done to understand local places and people and in turn meaningfully engage with these communities, a priority for the Mayor's investment in the project through the Good Growth Fund.

The panel were encouraged by the practical approach to fit-out design, which recognised the changing nature of kitchen workspace needs and promotes flexibility of space and future adaptability which 'designs-out' unnecessary operational issues.

The project team clearly communicated the constraints of delivering this facility and achieving occupancy within the context of a huge wider construction programme and while maintaining a nationally-significant operational market, which the panel took as the context for all comments and suggestions.

Local community

- The LRP recognised that Mission Kitchen needs to fulfil both a strategic function for London, serving the city's food and hospitality sector, but that there is also a strong ambition for the Food Exchange and the wider market to do more to benefit local communities, in terms of access to economic opportunity and as a cultural/social amenity.
- The project team and the panel discussed the changing nature of local demographics with significant amounts of new housing attracting new residents and that the project needed to give equal weight to engaging with the new and existing local communities. This is a clear priority for the Mayor and underpins his rationale for investment in regeneration programmes across London, including the Good Growth Fund.
- While the panel were encouraged by the projects ambition, they felt that in order to meet this aim, more work needed to be done to understand the nature and needs of local people. The panel recognised that the project team had good relationships with a number of local community groups and stakeholders, but that a more systematic approach to mapping the local networks would be likely to reveal greater opportunities for local engagement. The panel recognised that an engagement plan is required by the project team, indicating a series of their planned engagement activities and events to take place that engage local communities.
- The panel also encouraged the project team to consider how to target communications based on the findings of these exercises and consider how programming and more public facing uses might respond.

Affordability and payment models

- The panel interrogated the genuine affordability of the workspace at Mission Kitchen and encouraged review of the tiered approach and the minimum price point (daily or weekly). The

panel also encouraged the project team to be mindful of geography and differing local business demographics in understanding how 'affordability' is defined. The panel encouraged review of the projects business model and assumptions for pricing and how the business plan relates to emerging businesses requiring truly affordable space.

- The panel highlighted the 'pay-as-you-go' model, employed at Building Bloqs, has the benefit of providing basic access at a cheap rate and enabling emerging businesses freedom to access workspace on an 'as-needed' basis. Focussing affordability towards start-up, emerging business users would support the project aims and more established businesses could to an extent subsidise this.
- The panel encouraged a visit to Building Bloqs to learn from the shared ambitions of the spaces and business model.

Presence and connectivity with the wider market

- The panel emphasised that New Covent Garden Market is a challenging environment for visitors to navigate and that Mission Kitchen is 'hidden' within the Food Exchange building with little external presence. While the panel understand that there are practical realities to overcome during the short and medium-term, including a significant construction programme across the site, it was considered important to give greater consideration to the wider public realm of the market and the project's visibility and accessibility to visitors, local people and traders.
- The panel suggested that simple interventions like signage, wayfinding, floor markings and lighting could provide a clearer arrival to the site. In the longer term, the public realm across the site should be approached coherently to support the Food Exchange.
- The panel also highlighted that the opening of the new tube station adjacent to the site would be a huge opportunity for the facility and that engagement with the public realm proposals around this entrance was crucial.

Post-occupancy and flexibility

- The panel highlighted that the nature of the facility, serving emerging, innovative businesses, would need to be highly flexible and adaptive. Capacity to change spatial arrangement, function and respond to different users, should be almost immediate and is likely to happen on a very regular basis. For this reason, the panel were supportive of the design approach presented by 00 where fixed partitions and equipment are kept to a minimum and sharing of facilities is prioritised.
- The panel also highlighted that the approach also needed to be reflected in the project's budgeting, ensuring that resource was safeguarded to fund any future changes needed. Post-occupancy evaluation and user feedback would be key in informing how these funds should be utilised.

Governance

- The panel highlighted that the project could benefit from the support of a tailored and expert advisory board, in order to provide the project with transparent governance, but more importantly to advise and offer support and experience.

- A board should be focussed and lean, and expertise and experience sought could be focussed around funding, particularly how the project might access additional skills funding, connections to the local community, connections to the wider industry and communications skills.
- The panel also highlighted that there are a number of innovative workspace facilities across London who have developed informal, critical-friend networks, that Mission Kitchen could seek to engage with.

Next steps

- The panel are keen to provide ongoing support to the project and suggested that critical friends relationships could be established particularly with regard to development of the business plan and engagement strategy.