

BRINGING THE WONDER BACK TO EARLS COURT – THE EARLS COURT DEVELOPMENT COMPANY REVEALS PLANS FOR TRANSFORMATION OF 40 ACRE LARGELY DERELICT SITE



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The Earls Court Development Company (ECDC) has today unveiled a draft masterplan to deliver on their vision 'to bring the wonder back to Earls Court'. The ambitious redevelopment will see this long neglected, largely derelict 40-acre site in Zone 1 London reinstated as a destination for entertainment, innovation and excitement

Revealing plans to deliver up to 4,500 homes (targeting 35% affordable across all tenures), all set within a landscape-led development which aims to go beyond net zero and become a climate-positive neighbourhood, Rob Heasman, CEO of ECDC commented:

"Like a London jigsaw missing its final piece, this 40-acre site is perhaps Central London's most significant redevelopment opportunity. The site has an illustrious past which is a continual source of inspiration for us as we look towards the future. "We want to create a place which reinstates 'wonder' in this incredible part of London. We will help to create a more inclusive and equitable piece of city with homes for all incomes and stages of life, and thousands of jobs from training to start up to scale up. The development will integrate culture and public realm throughout, responding to the number one stated desire from local people; to have green and open spaces across the site. We have an ambition to be a global exemplar of responsible, sustainable development, putting people's health and well-being first."

The aspiration is for the development to incorporate the first large scale Zero Carbon energy sharing network in the UK, enabling local people to benefit from cost effective heat networks. Up to 15,000 jobs will be created with the development becoming a research and development hub for green tech, attracting businesses which have a role in transforming our future by responding to the climate crisis. The masterplan has been drafted following two years of discussion and engagement with local communities and stakeholders to understand the aspirations and priorities of those who already live and work in the area. Heasman continued:

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"Being based locally has given us the ability to get to know the communities in which we are based, to understand the experiences of people who live, work and go to school here. We have used that to inform and shape the draft masterplan concepts which we are now presenting."

Only 40% of the land has buildings on it, to genuinely prioritise the streetscape and public open spaces. Landscaped piazzas, play space and public gardens at the entrances will connect through a network of pedestrianised streets and spaces to a park at the heart of the site. The central 'Table' park will be a unique destination repurposing part of the former Exhibition Centre structure, connecting those who live, work and visit Earls Court. Earls Court was once a global showground for investment and ingenuity but it was always a private and closed off space with ticketed entrances. In recent years it has lain derelict, the Exhibition Centres closed in 2014 and were demolished in 2015 by the previous owners. Opening up the site with free access to all is a key priority.

The Earls Court Development Company have already brought early attractions to the site with the Underbelly Festival, the Lost Estate immersive theatre and the BBC Earth Experience featuring Seven Worlds One Planet narrated by Sir David Attenborough. A new Skills Centre will open on site in the spring of 2023, beginning to offer training opportunities to local people. The Centre will become a one-stop shop for future opportunities at Earls Court. The masterplan will continue to build on this, establishing Earls Court as a major cultural and employment destination once again, bringing venues, events and pop-up space throughout the development. Heasman added:

"We are acting now, bringing excitement and enterprise through our immediate site activations whilst also looking beyond the horizon to what future generations may need and aspire to. Above all, we are focusing on ensuring a masterplan which is deliverable, and which will create a thriving part of the city now and in the long term. We are delighted to share how our plans are coming together. We look forward to continuing our extensive discussions with the community and our stakeholders as the plans progress."

“
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Rob Heasman, CEO, ECDC

The impact of the closure of the Exhibition Centres on the local economy was drastic, with approximately £2bn per year lost in contributions to the UK economy. The plans will change this, bringing £6.5bn of private sector investment and delivering an exceptional package of benefits to the local area and the London economy.

Early economic projections include £1.2billion per year Gross Value Added (GVA) to the economy, £37.2m per year spending by workers to the local economy, and £40.5m per year generated in business rates. The masterplan will evolve over the course of 2023 with a planning application due to be submitted by the end of the year. The first phase of development, comprising 1,300 homes, the park and vital east-west connections will commence in 2025.

-ENDS-

Notes to Editors

- ECDC are committed to delivering an exemplary sustainable development that will bring substantial public benefits, not just locally but more widely across London.
- The plans enshrine social value, economic inclusion and environmental wellbeing into the approach from day one. The social value created in 2022 by ECDC's community and early site activation programme was £7.8m.
- This will be an inclusive and equitable piece of City; bringing up to 4,500 homes for people of all incomes and at all stages of life. The plans include homes for rent, for sale (including shared ownership), for students and for older people. These will cater for local need and target 35% being affordable across all tenures.
- This will be a destination for enterprise and economy; 15,000 jobs will be created, bringing opportunities for local talent to be nurtured and local businesses encouraged to grow.
- Approximately 2000 construction jobs will be created across the build programme. The Earls Court Skills Centre will be the central point for training and enterprise for the new Earls Court throughout the lifetime of the project, working with community groups and future employers to upskill local people. This sustainable development will bring the first large scale Zero Carbon energy sharing network in the UK, enabling local people to benefit from cost effective heat networks.
- This will be an emerging hub for bio-diversity and climate tech research and development, attracting businesses which have a role in transforming our future by responding to the climate crisis.
- The landscape led approach will make a substantial contribution to the level of open space within the wider area, boosting the health and wellbeing of new and existing residents, workers and visitors using this area.
- This will be a place for leisure; landscaped piazzas, public gardens and play at entrances will connect through a network of pedestrianised streets and spaces, giving way to a park at the heart of the site.
- This will be a celebration; remembering a glorious past and present by looking to a brilliant future, embedding the heritage of Earls Court into the way in which spaces and buildings are shaped.

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- This will be a bold development; bringing world class architecture to create the heritage of the future.
- This will be underpinned by ECDC's Sustainable Development Charter, which sets challenging and measurable requirements for the design team.
- The Zone 1 site is located close to three Tube stations and multiple bus routes, making it highly accessible.

About ECDC

The Earls Court Development Company is a new Earls Court-based business, responsible for driving the development of the Earls Court masterplan forward on behalf of Earls Court Partnership Limited. Earls Court Partnership Limited is the joint venture between Delancey (on behalf of its client funds and the Dutch pension fund manager, APG) and Transport for London (TfL).

The site was purchased in 2019 from its previous owners, Capital and Counties Properties (CapCo).

The first decision ECDC took after acquiring the site was to hand back the West Kensington and Gibbs Green housing estates - originally part of the previous owners' masterplan - to Hammersmith & Fulham Council.

Notes to Editors

About the Earls Court Site

The Earls Court site is formerly the site of the famous Earls Court Exhibition Centre, located in Zone 1, which was demolished several years ago leaving a largely cleared site circa 40 acres. It is also home to London Underground's Lillie Bridge Depot and several buildings and sheds. The site straddles two London boroughs - the Royal Borough of Kensington & Chelsea (RBKC) and the London Borough of Hammersmith & Fulham (LBHF).

The Mayor of London has identified the site as an Opportunity Area – an area which will be important to deliver the homes and jobs London needs for the future. In November 2022, Earls Court Partnership Limited completed the purchase of Lillie Bridge Depot and associated land from Transport for London (TfL). The transfer of the depot completed the masterplan land assembly, with the land forming a key part of the Earls Court masterplan site. Following the purchase, Lillie Bridge Depot has been leased back to TfL and will remain an operational site supporting the London Underground network while TfL assess if and how functions will be relocated.

Early delivery at Earls Court

ECDC has invested significantly in its community outreach to benefit the area early and activate the site rather than leaving it idle. To date, ECDC has:

- Launched the Earls Court Community Fund – now in its second year – giving an annual £180,000 to local community groups and charities.
- Opened the new Community Hub on Aisgill Avenue in June 2022, hosting a range of free activities and classes every week for local people to enjoy and benefit from.
- Brought homes back into use at Empress Place and at the former Seven Stars pub, offering homes to those on low income and key workers.
- Delivered affordable creative workspace and studios in collaboration with Projekt, called Empress Studios which opened in May 2022.

Notes to Editors

- Brought the live entertainment company Underbelly to site, who had two successful summers on with their unique mix of performance, live music, film and family fun – visited by over 160,000 people over the two years.
- Brought the BBC Earth Experience to site, a huge visitor attraction which will be an exceptional temporary experience.
- Brought the space in front of Earl's Court Station (Warwick Road entrance) back to life with art installations, first hosting the Pleasure Garden in summer 2021 and more recently the Stars of Earl's Court takeover by Azarra Amoy.
- Commissioned a self-guided walking tour, curated by leading architect Sam Jacob, in partnership with London Design Festival celebrating the architecture and design of Earl's Court entitled '20 Things'.
- Painted a colourful new mural around the staircase to the Table structure to celebrate the history of the site as part of Open House London.
- Transformed the site opposite West Brompton Station with a living wall green hoarding designed in collaboration between the Earls Court Youth Club and the National Portrait Gallery.
- Launched a portrait focused Artist in Residence programme in partnership with the National Portrait Gallery offering artists £3,000 a month for a three-month residency. Based at the Community Hub, the artist works with the local community providing art classes as part of the hub programmes as well as providing a key portrait output that will be put back into the Earls Court site.
- Created a Pop Up on Lillie Road – a free, temporary retail space that aims to support and grow new local businesses by offering a pressure-free environment in which to learn how to promote and sell their products. It offers brands visibility and awareness which can be one of the biggest challenges for any emerging artist, designer, student, or small business owner. Creatives can use the space for free for a month.

- Attracted The Lost Estate to Earls Court, who created a temporary visionary immersive theatre in the former Mannequin Factory located in West Kensington. A fantastical fusion of immersive sets, world-class performances, themed food and drink, it also gives back to the local community with free tickets, job opportunities and co-working space for local creatives.

Consultation and engagement so far

Phase 1 Summer 2020

This phase focused on building a rich picture of the site, the area and the history of the previous owners. This phase also included the first online consultation questions through Commonplace, asking local residents what they want to see and what meanwhile uses they would like on the site.

Phase 2 Summer 2021

Three events in August, saw approx. 360 local people attend.

Phase 3 Autumn 2021

Directly after phase 3 this material focused on stakeholder tours and the emerging 'guiding principles' of the development. This feedback was used to guide the development of four key priorities and a vision for ECDC.

Phase 4 Winter 2021

Four in-person events, a webinar and an online survey hosted by the platform Commonplace based on the newly realised Vision and four key priorities for a new scheme at Earls Court. Key themes which came from the feedback continued to revolve around the need for local green and public spaces, improved pedestrian access and a desire to see more details around the masterplan.

Phase 5 Summer 2022

ECDC hosted 32 events around the Earls Court Site and opened a consultation hub space in a shop unit called 'Conversation Corner'. This phase showed the community an early framework plan and some ideas for cultural and employment uses on site. The feedback from this was used to help shape the masterplan.

Phase 6 Autumn 2022

This ‘community update’ phase summarised the ‘meanwhile’ use activity, community events and actions taken so far by ECDC as part of the commitment to open up, use the site and give back to local communities before any building work has taken place.

Phase 7 February 2023

The masterplan launch.

Further phases of engagement will be held during 2023, with a planning application due to be submitted by the end of the year.