

VISION FOR THE FUTURE OF EARLS COURT REVEALED AS 7.5 MILLION SQ FT MASTERPLAN SUBMITTED FOR PLANNING



26/09/24

26TH SEPTEMBER 2024, LONDON - The Earls Court Development Company (ECDC) has revealed details on their planning application for the site of the former Earls Court Exhibition Centres, central London’s largest cleared development area.

Bringing together leading practices from across the UK, the scheme’s two masterplan architects, Studio Egret West and Hawkins\Brown, are joined by dRMM, Maccleanor Lavington, Sheppard Robson, Haworth Tompkins, Serie Architects and ACME working on the buildings, alongside landscape designs by SLA. ZCD Architects have helped ECDC set up a Public Realm Inclusivity Panel, comprising people across a range of ages and access needs, to inform and shape the design of the public realm.

Redefining the long-term empty site into a new destination for innovation and discovery, ECDC has assembled a group of architecture practices with a proven track record in successfully delivering new communities that are stitched into the surrounding neighbourhoods. Alongside the Outline Planning Application, detailed designs have been submitted for the first buildings in Phase 1 of the development, set to commence construction in 2026. Phase 1 includes commercial spaces, 1,500 new homes across a range of tenures (c.4,000 homes planned for the entire site), shops, cultural and community spaces, bars, and restaurants.

A network of Exhibition Gardens will position nature as a golden thread running through the masterplan. At the centre of the site will be the Table Park, which imaginatively repurposes the concrete foundations of the Exhibition Hall into a 4.5-acre urban park.

Opening up the Zone 1 site for the first time in 150 years and creating an east-west pedestrian route between West Kensington and Earl’s Court, the submitted plans take design notes from the characteristics and materiality of the local area, while incorporating aspects inspired by the Exhibition Centres that formerly occupied the site.

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“Embedding sustainability throughout all stages of decision-making at Earls Court is, quite simply, the right thing to do, and its impact can be traced from a macro, planetary scale down to the air being breathed by our neighbours around site.”

Peter Runacres

Head of Urban Futures

The Earls Court Development Company





Entering from Earl's Court Station, visitors will be greeted by a landscaped flower amphitheatre reinterpreting the iconic curved steps that led to the Exhibition Centre as a new place for social gathering. Taking inspiration from west London mansion blocks, the art deco architecture of C. Howard Crane (the Exhibition Centre's architect) and other prominent local buildings such as the Michelin House and Barkers Building, the new structures present a refined approach and material palette with design cues ranging from stepped facades to 'opera box' balconies and arched entrances.

Designed in proportion with its immediate context, the plans create new crescents in-keeping with the local urban fabric with taller buildings clustered close to the existing Empress State Building. The tallest building in the cluster, reaching 42 storeys, stands as a proud landmark that reshapes the west London skyline. The design by Sheppard Robson provides a slender tower that mirrors the water flowing from the adjacent Cascades in the Table Park, a playful, explorative landscape that helps navigate significant level changes across the site.

ECDC aims for the site to become a global exemplar of sustainability and will be operated through a net zero carbon energy network with a net zero operational carbon target. Aiming to be a showcase for the growing clean and climate tech industry, the development will deliver up to 2.9 million sq ft of workspace, 12,000 jobs, and three new anchor cultural venues.

Earls Court will build on the legacy of the site, putting it squarely back on the map as a prominent London destination once again.

Sharon Giffen, Head of Design, The Earls Court Development Company: "We're proud to showcase our design proposals for Earls Court, the result of over four years of engagement, consultation and design evolution with the public and our stakeholders. Working with our world class team of architects and consultants, we have prioritised landscape, inclusivity, climate resilience and design excellence within our masterplan and first detailed buildings. Earls Court is a once in a lifetime opportunity to build a better piece of city for the future. One that is resilient to global challenges and will set a new standard for urban development in London."

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Sharon Griffen
Head of Design
ECDC





David West, Founding Director at Studio Egret West: “We are thrilled that our co-authored vision will open up this exceptional site for the first time in 150 years, celebrating its legacy and setting ambitious expectations for the future. It has been a pleasure to craft, in an incredible spirit of collaboration and inclusion, a sequence of spaces and characterful places that will shape the extraordinary wonder of Earls Court. We are looking forward to seeing moments like the Cascades, the Table Park, the Empress Place Boulevard, the Train Shed at Lillie Sidings Square, and the Warwick Square Flower Amphitheatre all come to life.”

Roger Hawkins, Founding Partner at Hawkins\Brown: “Hawkins\Brown have enjoyed a wonderful collaboration with Studio Egret West over the past four years. We focused on a strategic framework which would evolve over time, respond to emerging opportunities, and encourage the collaborative input of other architects, landscape designers, engineers, and built environment experts. Our approach has been to find meaningful solutions and turn constraints into opportunities, while at the same time creating a masterplan which promotes future flexibility and allows for future collaborations.”

Rob Heasman, Chief Executive of The Earls Court Development Company: “We have listened to the wealth of stories and taken huge inspiration from Earls Court’s heritage, as a place that dared - to showcase, to entertain and celebrate the spectacular. A place that was so clearly cherished for being bold and brave, welcoming people from across the globe. Our plans retain that innovative spirit that embraces future thinking - an approach we believe has become more important now than ever before, an approach that continues to drive us to create a global exemplar of sustainability. We understand our responsibility to deliver much needed homes and employment opportunities for London, and nearly half the site will be devoted to green and open public space. Critical to achieving these aims is creating a place with personality, a place that once again becomes a destination with a broad cultural appeal and fully inclusive to all that come to experience it. That place will be Earls Court.”

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