

Earl's Court Opportunity Area Placemaking Framework

Early Engagement Summary of Feedback



THE ROYAL BOROUGH OF
**KENSINGTON
AND CHELSEA**

Planning and Place

Growth and Delivery Team

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Introduction

This report summarises conversations between members of the Earl's Court community and Kensington and Chelsea Council planning officers about the future of the vacant site where once was the Earl's Court exhibition centre. The feedback gathered has informed a placemaking framework providing guidance for development on the site.

Between May and October 2022, through the early engagement phase, the project team reached out to "long-time lovers of Earl's Court", as one resident put it. This is people with lived experience of the neighbourhood, including residents, business owners, artists, charity workers, school staff, and ward councillors. Their views offer a look into what defines the area in 2022, how it has changed over the past decades, and most importantly, what would enable development on the former exhibition centre site to integrate well into the existing neighbourhood.

The development site is known in planning terms as *opportunity area* because of its capacity to accommodate a substantial amount of new jobs and homes using nearby good public transport connections. There are 48 such areas in London. The *Earl's Court and West Kensington Opportunity Area* lies partially in Hammersmith and Fulham, hence its full name.. Our focus is on Earl's Court, within the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea.

The *Key findings* section in this report offers a quick overview of the feedback gathered, including the headlines:

- Integrate the opportunity area as much as possible with Earl's Court
- Building height is a key concern
- Earl's Court is and should remain eclectic and multicultural
- Earl's Court needs new public green spaces

The section *Practical ideas for the opportunity area* lists specific things that the community said could be delivered within the development area for the benefit of the wider neighbourhood. These range from indoor cultural venues to requirements for parks and public green spaces.

The feedback gathered is place specific and its geographies are rendered on the *Engagement map*. Significant places mentioned by the community are marked out on the map, as well as the community stakeholders taking part, key routes used by local people, and relevant zones at the threshold of Earl's Court and the opportunity area.

The section *Community views* provides the evidence base analysed in this report. It is a long list of quotes taken on various engagement opportunities and then sorted by theme. The comments were anonymised to avoid exposing either who provided the quote or the subject of what was said. Any potentially offensive comments have been excluded.

Through the conversations, consultees mentioned places they like outside of Earl's Court which could serve as inspiration for the opportunity area, particularly for new cultural venues. These are listed in this document under *Positive precedents*.

In addition to fieldwork, the project team also reviewed consultations conducted in the neighbourhood since 2012. The review provided a set of topics to be discussed with the community in 2022 and a baseline for preparing the early engagement strategy. Key takeaways from the review and its sources are listed on the final section *Findings from previous consultations*.

The early engagement phase ended at the publication of the draft placemaking framework for consultation in late October 2022. For a period of eight weeks ending in December 2022, anyone was able to provide written feedback on the draft policy document. Details of the eight-week consultation are included in the schedule of consultation responses.

Engagement methods

The purpose of the early engagement phase was to tap into the local knowledge of groups and individuals very familiar with Earl's Court and translate the findings into guidance for future development in the opportunity area.

At the start of the early engagement phase, the project team reached out to key community stakeholders to discuss and agree the engagement strategy, and to refine the initial community stakeholder mapping. Ward councillors, the Earl's Court Society, and the Earl's Court Community Trust were the first to hear from the team.

Once an engagement plan was agreed, the project team reached out to additional community stakeholders. A full list of groups involved in the early engagement phase is published alongside the *Engagement map* in this report.

A key aspect of the early engagement plan was to ensure diversity of views informing the planning process. Therefore, different engagement platforms were set up to match people's different levels of engagement with the planning system.

Groups usually represented in the planning system such as residents' associations were invited to discuss emerging guidance at meetings and to share ideas on an online forum. The key community stakeholders mentioned above were instrumental in this process, helping to disseminate information to organisations under their umbrella and to feedback concerns picked up from their networks.

A different strategy was put in place to engage seldom heard voices. These are people less familiar with planning regulations and with less time to invest in consultations than members of residents' associations. Based on Census data for Earl's Court ward and literature on seldom heard voices in the planning system, the project team identified a set of target demographics and invited individuals for semi-structured interviews. Vulnerable individuals were offered shopping vouchers as compensation for their time, in line with council policy on incentives in community engagement for one-off or infrequent activities.

Although interviewees' identity is protected, each person represents one or more of the following social characteristics:

- Charity worker
- English as a second language

- Hotel owner/manager
- Local creative/artist
- Older people
- People with special needs
- Retail owner/manager on Earl's Court Rd
- Social housing tenant
- Young people

Everyone who took part in the early engagement phase has been asked to review this summary of feedback before its publication to a wider audience for an eight-week consultation period. The document has been amended following their suggestions.

This summary of feedback was amended again in March 2023 to include reference to engagement activities undertaken after its first publication, as explained below.

An in-person exhibition showcasing key aspects of the draft placemaking framework took place in early November 2022 at a local primary school. The purpose of the event was to close the feedback loop for the early engagement phase and mark the start of the final stage of consultation.

The exhibition was open to anyone. It was publicised to everyone engaged in any way up to that point. Also families with school children, residents' associations, charities, community groups, and housing providers based up to 500 metres from the site were contacted. As well as organisations mentioned by consultees at the early engagement phase.

The event was an opportunity for members of the local community to speak to Council officers involved in the project and to provide feedback on the draft policy document. Their feedback was taken into account as responses to the draft placemaking framework and thus included in the schedule of consultation responses published alongside the adopted policy.

Key findings

An overview of the key feedback received to date.

Integrate the opportunity area as much as possible with Earl's Court

Through character

Avoid anonymous buildings and empty streets.

Garden square typology is absolute goal although without a lock.

Mansion blocks are good examples of high density living without tall buildings.

Through culture

The role of performing arts is key to the identity of Earl's Court.

Arts, culture, and crafts can be the mechanism through which the opportunity area is made viable and different from other anonymous-looking developments.

It is not only about consuming, but also about making things: "Culture means creative".

High demand in West London for mid-sized venues (300-500 seats).

Through business

Arts and culture and business should work together.

The development could benefit the whole of Earl's Court by making it a destination, increasing footfall, and allowing local businesses to display themselves to new clients.

Improving Earl's Court Road is a major concern as well as tackling anti-social behaviour.

Through community

Earl's Court is very diverse, and many residents feel a strong sense of community.

Area needs a centre which is free, welcoming and lively, with indoor and outdoor spaces.

Residents would like to name places in the development, particularly the Warwick Rd apron.

Building height is a key concern

"It is wrong to assume there is need to build tall to accommodate many people."

"Towers will decrease the appeal of our area as a whole."

There is currently no feeling of oppressiveness from overbearing tall buildings in the area.

Sunny, bright streets and flats in the area cannot be undermined by towers.

Earl's Court is and should remain eclectic and multicultural

Retain the diversity of ethnicities and lifestyles as well as uses, income, and tenure.

Avoid "boring" monoculture high-end housing only.

The development must produce community and encourage families to move in.

Earl's Court needs new green spaces nearby

"Not like a garden designed by the Chelsea flower show where you can't touch the grass.

(...) Something that is alive to be used by everybody."

Without that sense of "are you meant to be here or not".

Older residents and families need more opportunities to mingle outdoors.

Spaces to exercise and discover, a mix of woodland and grassy patches, "a mini-Holland Park".

Current sense that air quality is poor, so welcome anything that enables cleaner air.

Practical ideas for the opportunity area

A list of ideas volunteered by the Earl's Court community to be delivered within the development site for the benefit of the whole neighbourhood.

Culture and arts

- A multi-purpose performing venue of national significance
- 300-500 seats venue for performing arts
- Dedicated space to support performing arts programme for local school pupils, particularly theatre (for classes, rehearsal and performances), indoors and outdoors
- London Museum of Music
- An all-season home for Opera Holland Park

Green open spaces

- Garden squares without a lock
- A maze for children in a formal garden
- Unstructured and structured open green spaces for kids to explore and exercise
- Diversity of trees
- Trees that attract birds
- Public outdoor gym area
- Culinary garden/allotments for school children and adults
- A mini park with water features, welcoming to older people and families
- Sensory garden for the visually impaired
- Recycling and composting bins

Curated public spaces

- Support microbusinesses to operate around new park
- A new home for the Earl's Court Farmer's Market
- Food stalls for Earl's Court Rd eateries in the new development
- A garden space on Warwick Road with temporary uses (Christmas tree, pop up café, outdoor performances)

Walking and cycling

- Safer walking and cycling routes, particularly north-south through Lillie Bridge/Old Brompton Rd and West Cromwell Rd
- Encourage cycling by providing safer routes for children and adults

Engagement map

The map at the end of this section highlights significant aspects of Earl's Court's places and people from the perspective of the local community. The text below expands on the key features marked out on the map.

Thresholds

The opportunity area sits on the quieter side of Earl's Court, to the west of Warwick Rd. According to residents, this poses challenges and opportunities. They say it will not be easy to integrate the opportunity area with the existing district centre on Earl's Court Rd through narrow streets.

Trebovir and Penywern roads are expected to become the main links. They are currently taken up by hotels, homes, some social housing units, and no retail. They lead to the apron of Warwick Road, poised to become the main "gateway" to the new site for most of the Earl's Court community and for visitors coming from Earl's Court station.



Photos: Trebovir Road and Penywern Road, June 2022

The apron is a focal point to Earl's Court residents. The ideal place for what they say is a much-needed mid-sized performing venue connected to a public park or square. The demand is rooted in an alleged lack of space for performances in West London. The new venue should also support existing drama programmes for local school pupils that struggle to find spaces for rehearsals and performing. This would allow the apron to become a centre for the Earl's Court community, as residents say that the neighbourhood lacks a clear centre. Residents currently connect mostly through associations and struggle to find places to meet and mingle.

Local creatives would like to have the opportunity to name this place. Something playful to pay tribute to the neighbourhood's former glory as a lively destination for night-time entertainment and performance arts while also creating an explicit connection between the development area and the existing neighbourhood.

Despite the challenges, residents believe that developing the exhibition centre site could create a new pull to the neighbourhood, helping Earl's Court to step away from the shadow of South Kensington. However, this should not mean catering only for the wealthy. Locals are mindful of the influx of wealth from Kensington that have been transforming the Earl's

Court community in recent years. They say this should be tempered with anchors for community in the opportunity area, so that families and individuals on different levels of income are able to settle there.

Old Brompton Rd is another relevant route on the threshold of the opportunity area, alongside Warwick Rd. They are used by local school pupils to access Fulham Pools to the west and Holland Park to the north. Pupils walk along these streets on their way to exercise. Some parents also cycle through with their children on their way to the school, although some deem it too risky. Any improvements to the walking and cycling environment along such roads would be welcomed by the local community.

Within the site, residents say any potential new north-south route should consider improving safety for pedestrians and cyclists on crossings at West Cromwell Rd and Old Brompton Rd. A new east-west connection would also allow Earl's Court residents to walk or cycle to West Kensington through the opportunity area.

Backing onto the opportunity area there are terraced crescents and the listed St Cuthbert's Church. Residents and hotels owners value the sunny, bright flats and hotel rooms, event at the lower ground. They worry new buildings could undermine this condition. St Cuthbert's is also a quiet, solemn spot that could offer a calm entrance to the development site.

Outstanding examples of local character

When asked what they liked most about the area, most consultees responded, "the local community". However, some consultees also mentioned streets, squares, and buildings. These cherished places display elements of what makes Earl's Court's character unique, in the eyes of local people. Such places are highlighted on the map and commented below.

Earl's Court Square displays an outstanding sample of architecture representing different periods, a synthesis of the diversity of styles in the area. The listed terraces on numbers 30-52 are particularly "stunning", as one resident described them. "Big old trees" around the garden square complete the setting.

Nevern Square is another example of "majestic tree cover". As residents said, "Earl's Court is defined by garden squares".

Nearby Nevern Place is an example of distinctive street style conferred by the pillars on building entrances. Each street has different pillars, which help locals to situate themselves.

There are several local examples of gaps between buildings where passers-by can see the sky and catch a glimpse of back gardens. Residents value this streetscape experience.

The neighbourhood is cut through by two busy and noisy roads, Earl's Court and Warwick. However, side streets are "nice and quiet". The Earl's Court Village Conservation Area around Kenway Rd is said to be particularly private. Barkston and Bramham Gardens off Earl's Court Rd are surprisingly so despite being very close to the high street.

Community stakeholders and other significant community groups

The dark blue dots on the map represent the community stakeholders that took part in the early engagement phase. They were:

- An-nisa Women's Empowerment Group
- Eardley Crescent Residents' Association (RA)
- Earl's Court Community Trust
- Earl's Court Cultural Quarter Group
- Earls Court Gardens & Morton Mews RA
- Earl's Court Society - Planning & Conservation Group (with Licensing)
- Earls Court Society's Transport Subgroup
- Earl's Court Square RA
- Jade Hotel
- Kempsford Gardens RA
- Nevern Square Conservation Area Association
- Nucleus Legal Advice Centre
- Over Under coffee
- Philbeach RA
- St Cuthbert with St Matthias Primary School
- TLC Estate Agents
- United Europe Bridge
- Ward Councillors

The red dots indicate significant local groups that were mentioned by consultees. These groups, as well as additional residents' associations, were encouraged to engage through the formal consultation on the draft placemaking framework.

- Dad's House
- Finborough Theatre
- Refettorio Felix
- Response Community Projects
- St Cuthbert's Church
- The Mosaic Rooms
- The Troubadour

Community views

“Long-time lovers of Earls Court” talking about their neighbourhood and the opportunity area in their own words.

What defines Earls Court in 2022

Character and built environment

- “EC is defined by garden squares”
- “The architecture is really interesting. In the squares you have this unique representation of different periods in architecture’
- The height of buildings to street width
- The gaps where you see the sky
- There is currently no feeling of enclosure or oppressiveness from overbearing tall buildings in the area
- Sunny, bright streets and flats. “Even lower ground units are sunny in the crescents”
- Buildings are set back with railings
- Dense mansion blocks, most about six storeys high
- Entrance with pillars, each street has different pillars
- Tree lined streets, big old trees
- “The EC [exhibition centre] was an iconic building. It did represent the area, was the first thing you saw when you got out the tube station, everything was geared around it. [...] It was sad to see that community structure just disappear.”
- The side streets feel “really nice”, as opposed to the busy main roads (EC and Warwick roads)

People and community

- “Here in EC everyone knows everyone, there’s really that feeling of a village here. And it’s strange when you think because we don’t really have a sort of centre, it’s just a road and streets around that. And despite that there are **long term lovers of EC** who have been there for over 20 years and always in connection with each other. So, you can build on something very strong”
 - “It’s difficult to identify [a centre of community] because the communal gardens as you know are closed with a key. (...) But we open it for events”
 - “Sometimes the only community place [people] have is to go to Starbucks with the kids. I mean, what kind of place is that?”
 - “We have a lot of committees, so that’s how we connect with each other”
- “What’s great about EC is the mix of populations”
 - “EC has a cross section of social extracts”
 - EC has always had lots of different communities (of different ethnicities, cultures and identities) “living cheek by jowl”. Typically London.
 - “When I first came [20 years ago] there was a lot of Iranians, a large gay community. Also lots of protected tenants which is unusual for London.”
 - Currently, “we have [a] bit of a clash (...) because of all the hotels around EC, there’s a lot of temporary accommodation in which, as I understand, a lot of

homeless people or even like people who are [abusing drugs] or people in trouble have been located since Covid”

- “It is a community which is very varied and not all with an English heritage”
- The local primary school takes many refugees and asylum seekers as well as embassy families, and kids from different local authorities
- Large percentage (~73-75%) of EAL (English as an Additional Language) students “Between 25 and 30 different languages represented in the school. The main language is Arabic”.
- Pupils from Middle East, North Africa, America, Australia etc.
- “Another great thing about Earl’s court is the mixture of tenure” (private renting, owner occupier, social landlords)
 - Social diversity should be retained in the new development through diversity of tenure
 - “Where will the social housing provision be? Not all in H&F”. Support for social housing on the RBKC side of the opportunity area
 - Big houses look grand from the front but chopped up into lots of small studio flats by large London housing associations and private landlords. “Behind the facade it is quite a complicated community”
 - The “EC Hub” (supported by the EC Trust) offers community space for voluntary groups and RA meetings. St Cuthberts church is alternative venue

Local economy and creative industry

- “There’s a number of people who are involved in the creative initiatives. For such a small area it’s incredible”
 - “Chelsea Theatre, the Finborough Theatre, the Drayton Arms, the Troubadour, the Mosaic Rooms, Gallery 286 – all of these are very active in the community, they communicate a lot (...) and this is all in a very small area, so there’s so much happening”
 - “I feel very connected to the area because it’s a place that inspired me a lot to do shows”
- Theatre productions on garden squares every summer starring local primary school children
 - Supported by the EC Trust and run by local theatre directors/actors
 - Relying mostly on churches for rehearsal space at the moment
- Tourists stay in EC to visit London as a whole
 - “There is a lot of reasons to stay in Earl’s Court. There are museums here, you can come in from Heathrow quite quickly, if you take the Eurostar to King’s Cross you can come straight here, it’s generally quite clean and safe. And people are used to staying here.”
 - “What we don’t have any specific destinations here”
 - Significant supply of rooms, either hotel or short-let, shows there is demand for staying in Kensington and Chelsea
 - However, competition with other areas in London is increasing

- EC being an affluent area and the busy station offer opportunities for high-end retail and hospitality. However, at the moment there are very few entrepreneurs exploring this market.
- EC is “very lively because of the presence of EC Rd, and the shops and the feeling of community. So, I think that mix I like particularly, it’s very alive, as opposed to other areas like Onslow gardens”

Location and services

- “It’s the best tube station to live near, I don’t see any other tube station that is better in terms of connection to the rest of London”
- “It’s quite central to London, close to the airports.”
- “I like the fact that it has got everything I need around it, parks, shops, gardens, doctors, transport, all the things that actually are useful.”
- “We always hoped that the quality of the trade on EC Rd would improve, but in fact we see that it is a lot of betting shops, unused shops. Ryman just left, I hear that Boots is leaving too. So, yeah, we are a bit afraid that it is going to be even more impoverished, and that the future development might be all very nicely brand new looking but next to a road which is actually quite poor and then the beautiful communal gardens. So, on a very small area there could be kind of three realities coexisting, rather than creating something that could be a harmonious ensemble.”

What used to define Earl’s Court and why it is changing

“It was a stopping off point (...) a gateway into London” for people moving here. “It’s less so now, seems a lot more settled’.

- Kensington and Chelsea encroaching on EC and changes in H&F demographic. Working class have become a lot wealthier.
- EC is still “transient” but the nature of it changed. Before was people moving into London, now it’s tourists in holiday lets (e.g. Airbnb) and foreign investors that are never here
- “Everything’s a bit more transient now, both residential and businesses”
- “There’s buildings on this road where 50-60% of the flats will be permanently short let. (...) You effectively have no occupants.”

Earl’s Court is becoming “more expensive”

- “Because [Earl’s Court] is close to Kensington it started to be the really rich young people that moved in, and that has changed the character, it became less tolerant, more selfish... and that has really affected people like us who kept believing in this community.”
- Communities are dying out. They get older and disappear. They are priced out.
- “Everywhere around here became quite expensive so EC became quite expensive”
- “It’s getting smaller and smaller what EC was”
- “It was kind of cool a while ago”, edgier, a little bit like East London is now. “There was a bit more diversity then”

- EC used to be one of those bits of west London which were how city fringe used to be, “the cheapest place to live and still be centrally located”
- “It used to be like a Notting Hill of the 80s, reasonable prices, everything” and everyone

*“There was a very strong community [of hotel owners] here going back maybe 20 years.”
Family-run businesses.*

- Since the mid-2000s a lot of foreign buyers bought the hotels. “You wouldn’t even know who really owned them.”
- EC also facing competition from more hotels in regenerated areas across London, e.g. Leyton where they can offer lower rates because costs are lower there.
- “EC has missed out on the Crossrail [Elizabeth Line]”. East London now also has quick access to Heathrow airport.
- A lot of events have gone to East London so there’s more drawing people there.
- There are many flats in EC which are essentially hotel rooms, short lets via Airbnb, but aren’t regulated so can undercut hotels. “That prevents a rate growth for hotels although costs keep rising”
- “You’re only allowed to short let for 90 nights in a year otherwise it becomes a change of use.” “There’s this planning rule that exists that we have to adhere to, but our competitors don’t”. It’s essentially an extra stock with more flexibility.
- Hotels take responsibility over their guests and what they do. For instance, making sure that they dispose their rubbish correctly. This doesn’t happen in short lets
- “About half of that [residential in the new development] will end up on Airbnb, one way or another”

“A bigger driver of our revenue is how well London is doing, how busy London is”

- “I would say supply has been the major thing [undermining hotels] rather than the Exhibition Centre closing”
- “I don’t think [the hotel] trade here has suffered hugely because the exhibition centre closed.” It’s true “there are certain periods of the year where we had above normal revenue because the exhibition centre’s here”. But “a lot of those exhibitions went to Olympia anyway so it’s not as though they’re completely gone”.
- The nature of big events has changed, more spread out in London now. Hence EC not being a major destination anymore despite the exhibition centre
- The music scene in EC has dissipated

Anti-social behaviour getting worst in EC

- “EC Rd is horrible. You get massive concrete lorries coming by, it’s so busy, there are always road works.”
- “If you wake up at 7.30 in the morning in EC Rd, its full of beggars, drunk people, drug [abusers]. (...) It comes in collision with families, with the well-off people who live in the area. So, of course sometimes it’s not super harmonious, because people are afraid for their children. Sometimes on my doorstep people were smoking crack, so that’s the reality of EC”

- Residents feel they have little control over EC Rd although would like to find ways to maintain and improve the quality of the high street. “If it’s betting shop after betting shop, or like fried chicken, you know. (...) So, how do you control who’s taking the lease?”
- Drug use/dealing around the station
- Rubbish, urinating, taking drugs in front of residencies, basement flats particularly affected. “I can’t say anything because being so vulnerable they smash the window”
- “If you make enemy with certain people then you get even more targeted”
- “Police are so stretched they don’t care”
- “We have a huge problem with [drug abusers], leaving their needles in the street.” “A huge problem with [people sleeping rough]. EC Rd is so busy, the streets are dirty.”

Ways to integrate the opportunity area with Earl’s Court

Integration through character

- No gates. "High degree of integration"
 - “It’s important that it feels like this area that’s going to be redeveloped feels very open towards EC (...) in the sense that it feels like there’s a fluidity between the two zones”
 - “It’s not easy because the streets are quite narrow, to create a sense of fluidity and communication between the two zones will be a key architectural and urbanistic challenge. (...) We don’t want to turn our gaze towards Gloucester road and South Ken. You have to turn the people’s gaze towards (...) our area. (...) At the moment there’s a little bit of a divide because after EC Rd it’s just Warwick Rd and nothing.”
- Avoid anonymous tower blocks. Needs character
 - Nice looking brick buildings
 - Create a human scale at ground level that doesn't feel anonymous. Busy ground level, people on the street
 - Not like blocks to the north of Warwick that don't offer anything to the street
 - Victoria Plaza [negative precedent]: It could be anywhere, no identity and out of keeping with the area
 - “The coldness and the emptiness of new developments, because we see what happened in Lots Rd or in new places [Design Centre, Chelsea Harbour], it is very dead, there’s no life, and it feels very sterile.”
- “If architecture is reflective of an era, and the need of our current location and era is looking at eco and sustainable living, I think it would be good for it to address that.”

Integration through spaces and services for the Earl’s Court community

- “Not having a lock gate is a good way of reinterpreting the garden square in the future”
 - “Key for the garden is 190£ a year, unaffordable for old people. (...) Yes, you can go up to Holland Park, but if you have mobility issues how do you get there? So [older people] are becoming more and more alienated.”
 - “Children in our school (...) might live in dwellings where they are in a basement or in a block of flats or they don’t have access to a garden. (...) And they really love the opportunity to be outdoors in our garden area at the back. (...) They just

- adore physical activity, and they're not necessarily getting that at home because they don't have the spaces"
- "Many of our children would come from either bed sits or one room dwellings, so having an outside space is really important. They really enjoy coming to a school where they can be out in the playground or in the garden."
 - "We try to encourage families to take their children out to the parks at the weekend, but it is a little bit of a journey up to the park [Holland Park]"
 - We need "a natural space where children could do exploring with insects and the trees and grass, where they could just have free time. But then also some spaces where they could be playing ball games"
 - "Having some almost unstructured outdoor environment, but then also perhaps having a structured field that is for sports"
 - "Something that [children] could explore that's more natural and then something that's structured, things like climbing walls"
 - A space where they could practice orienteering. "It's good for team building but also for exploring and their sense of adventure"
 - "I also think it would be really good for children to see a culinary garden, so having plants or herbs that are growing and (...) a sensory garden for blind people so they can follow the trail and sense the different herbs"
 - "Encouraging fauna, bird life, nature, not only have the vegetation but doing what they can to encourage the species to have a home, (...) having shady spaces and open spaces"
 - Those on a low income and migrants look for places that are not "policed from the point of view 'are you meant to be here or not?' (...) [Not] feeling like you're going to be moved on." Also, the importance of feeling safe there.
 - "We need a proper green space. Not like a garden designed by the Chelsea flower show where you can't touch the grass. (...) Something that is alive, being able to be used by everybody"
 - "A mini holland park"
 - "It doesn't have to be enormous. They can learn from Japanese gardens, they have gardens as big as this table. (...) But when you're sitting next to it, if you've got 2, 3 pensioners they've got no friends because family moved away and they are lonely, they can sit and talk"
 - "We [older people] need to talk, we need to share, we need to stay alive and help each other and that's what we do. But if you alienate us anymore, what is the point to keep going?"
 - "Anything that enables cleaner air in the local area because this is one of the most highly polluted areas"
 - Locate services or existing group/voluntary organisation in the new development
 - Locate a community space there. Suitable for meetings, events, celebrations, or just somewhere to hang about without spending any money
 - Locate something which is freely available

- “We don’t have public [indoor] spaces. We have a public library, but you have to rent the rooms and it’s not like in the public libraries of the past where you used to find lots of people just hanging about.”
- “This entrance [Warwick Apron] has to be really [inviting]. I hope that it won’t be covered with buildings”. “How open it is, how inviting it is, how complementary it is to the rest there.” Locate a rehearsal space and community café that spills outdoors.
- “What a wonderful opportunity to create spaces for communities to come together outdoors to work on community gardening projects. (...) As a part of this a garden club for seniors and for school children could be established. It would be a very effective and impactful way to build community and contribute to the Pollinator Superhighway initiative. Allotments should be available for the wider Earl's Court community, not just those living in the new development to allow "cross pollination" between the old and new parts of Earl's Court.”
- There is a perceived lack of public spaces for youngsters to hang out
- Sports area for kids “instead of playing in the streets”
- “Maybe have a little area for babies and toddlers so they can run around safely”
- "It would be a great improvement to be able to walk or cycle from Earl's court to West Kensington" through the opportunity area
- “We want an intergenerational community”, not only youngsters
 - “Anything that encourages that [intergenerational exchange]” would be good, “spaces where elders can watch the younger enjoying, exploring or performing”

Integration through culture and identity

- “Culture has the power of creating an imagination, an identity”
 - “The arts, culture, and crafts can be the mechanism through which the Earl’s Court development is made viable, sustainable, inclusive, vibrant, and different from the many other anonymous-looking developments popping up all over London and the rest of the country. It is the coming together of creative forces in these sectors that could unlock the way to make Earl’s Court an exciting place to live, work, and visit”
 - “Artist-led spaces have the power of creating an ‘imagination’, an ‘identity’ to the area. However, it is not only about consuming culture or the hospitality industry. It is about offering spaces where people make things, rehearse, perform, create.”
 - “Culture means creative”
 - Hospitality can also be creative, artist-led spaces and businesses
 - The most prominent cultural offer in the opportunity area will provide this identity
 - Conviviality
 - Contract with cultural institutions such as a museum should include requirement to deliver more than its core activity to make it “creative”. “Museums don’t create”
- “EC has a history of theatre and music and arts so I think it’s lovely to keep that alive”

- “What we don’t have in EC, what we have a big lack of, is space. Whether it’s indoor space for rehearsing, giving classes, having studios, whether for artists or music. Then you could attract young people. (...) So, really a space to support artistic creation would be absolutely fantastic and correspond to the wealth of talent which exists around here. A space that could be transformed into a multipurpose performing space, something that could be a place to work in but also to present.”
- The closer to EC this space is, the better. “As you can see this area lacks a centre”. Children don’t know where to hang out, families don’t know where to meet.
- “We always struggle to find a place to show the work of the [after school drama] students. We have to go to Soho. There’s no space.”
- Taking The Scoop in Tower Bridge as example: “I think it’s absolutely great. It’s not only to present shows, it could be a market square, it could be a place where people just meet and sit on the steps.”
- Referring to the new space in the opportunity area: “If it can be connected to an indoor space for the winter, where we can do rehearsals and all sorts of things.”
- “The Westway Trust is a good example. (...) I hear it is really good, they develop sports activity, musical studios, artist studios, so if you want to look at places that I think are quite successful in gathering the young but also the creative talent in an area.”
- Poplar Union and Tonybee Studios also good examples
- “These places always have a café attached to it, which is great because that’s where people meet before the class, after, the parents come and sit there. It becomes a sort of centre. So, I would imagine like a rehearsal space or a space to support creation next to a café and then next to that outdoor space with the steps where people can gather, would be I think quite a great thing”
- “And try to connect it to this area so that it doesn’t feel like you have to walk too long or go through buildings”
- Community would like to name this place: “I think it could get people to come out of curiosity, and also they start using the name, you know they say “let’s meet at...”.
- “I think we need to be playful because [EC] was always a place (...) of encounters, like, gay community, (...) then the Australian community, French, lots of small theatres. (...) Eclectic is a very good word for EC.”
 - “EC Mix”, “EC Steps”, “EC Arena”, “EC Jumble”, “EC Blend”, “EC Mingle”, “EC Vibe”, “Eclectic EC”
- “Get rid of that word new” to refer to the development. EC is already here
- “We want to maintain the edginess of EC”
 - “Not like Belgravia, thank God!”
 - “There’s an edgy thing”
- “The site is large enough for a cultural venue of genuine significance and it benefits from extremely good transport links.”

- “Is this an opportunity to bring [Opera Holland Park] to a site where year round performances are possible? During the summer season in Holland Park the venue should be flexible enough to be used for other performing arts groups, hired to schools for end of year graduations or other offers that benefit local residents and encourage a sense of community and placemaking.”
- “All for Opera venues at new site but not large concert arenas”
- “Many of us would like to see the promised replacement venue, not small areas dotted round the new site taking the place of cultural venues. We recall the local plan promised in 2015 that ‘Earl’s Court will remain the location for a large convention centre or exhibition function’ and the Mayor at the time who signed off the plan to demolish the centre promised a replacement venue of national and international significance.”

Integration through business

- EC has lot’s going for it but “what we don’t have as much is specific destination things”
 - EC is “sort of a mixed bag, great things – nature, cultural initiatives, great people – but also that feeling of a bit of a let-down in terms of trade, unlooked after or run-down hotels, shabby places. But the new development could change things radically I would say. So, it’s like circulation of energy, circulation of people will be key.”
 - "I think it is this connection [between arts and culture and business] that ought to be highlighted and emphasised. Artisan-led restaurants, independent bars, independent shops, artists’ studios, creation spaces, performance spaces, and exhibition spaces, all working together will provide both the community and visitors alike with something that is very much lacking in Earl’s Court at the moment. It is also what will make Earl’s Court [opportunity area] an economically viable development that is sustainable and different."
 - For hotels, the “busiest weeks of the year always generally are Chelsea Flower Show, Wimbledon and London Fashion Week. (...) [This] gives a really nice boost. (...) And the ability to display yourself to a customer that might not otherwise come to EC. (...) So, something that brings people to the area”
 - “Earls Court needs to be marketed better to visitors so we see a more diverse crowd visiting”
 - “The existing Earl's Court Farmers Market could be relocated to the [development site] site where there would be more space for additional stalls selling seasonal produce. A vibrant market something like the world famous Greenmarket in New York's Union Square could provide inspiration. Both place benefit from extremely good transport links and a high density of residents within walking distance. Union Square is a great public space. The Earl's Court Opportunity Area should also include a great public space to host a market of this type which could attract residents, tourists, student groups, local restaurants who could source fresh seasonal produce at the market.”

- “It will create a vibrant and lucrative venue that both sides visitor residents/ outsiders and sellers could benefit from. This could do for EC what Portobello Rd did for Notting Hill.”
- Pavilion Road, Chelsea, (restaurants/bars and shops) “is a great example of a vibrant and pleasant yet lucrative development”. Something like that in the opportunity area “could inject life and fun into Earl’s Court for all its residents and visitors and place our neighbourhood on the map”
- “Personally I don’t think this big area [the development] is going to affect the people that are coming to Earls Court this side [to EC Rd].”

What would make things worse

“We’re all very scared of the height of the buildings”

- “Building height should be key guidance”
- “Towers will disfigure our landscape, stop us from seeing the light/sunset and decrease the appeal of our area as a whole”
- “Lower typologies can accommodate high density. Look at Earls Court Square for instance. 750 addresses, mix of one bed, two bed, and larger.”
- “Can we assess how high do we need to go instead of accepting what the developer can get away with? It's wrong to assume there is need to build tall to accommodate many people”
- “How does the new development compare to the existing neighbourhood in terms of density? How many people do the Council want to accommodate on this site?”
- What's the forecast of family, children, population increment over time?
- "Council wants to dump housing target in EC"
- Elephant Castle is terrible example
- “Developers see maximum [site allocation] as target, that's the problem”
- “Up to 20 stories is too high”
- “High-rise is not ideal (...) but I know sometimes there is needed for space, for numbers of city dwellers”

“Making it accessible only for the rich, people who come over and buy to invest”

- Monoculture, one type of identity/clientele like the previous proposal
- Destination of choice for elites from around the world, just parachuting money in without any overspill of benefit for rest of the area/community
- Super luxury hotel “just sort of plonked there”
- Offering “no real social housing”, no truly affordable homes
- “Can we end up with a whole compound of studio flats?” We need family flats, where people can stay when they grow older
- Concerns around built to rent. “Nobody will live there for a long time”
- What size units are we talking about [in the opportunity area]?

“A boring housing development”

- “Obviously there needs to be some housing in London, but being able to combine it with something exciting, something that drives people there. (...) What’s gonna drive people here?”
- “A full residential scheme would probably only help the developer that builds it, I don’t think it would help the area, so it needs to be a mixed-use scheme. (...) So various destinations, shopping, arts, some venue space”
- “The hospitality industry can build around the footfall.”
- “You don’t generally get many companies that set up here, I imagine it’s because of costs”
- “Start-ups generally end up in east London and then they’ll tend to live in that area”.
“Just providing workspace probably wouldn’t bring those people, because ‘it’s a whole ecosystem”

Not green enough

- “Not to have any green spaces for unstructured [use]. (...) Child-centred arts cultural and sporting [activities], not to have any of that would be sad’
- Not tackling air pollution or contributing to increase biodiversity – particularly birds and variety of trees

Added pressure on current infrastructure

- “One thing that upsets me about the new development, because there will be a lot more demographic, is the infrastructure that we have in place here, sewage, gas, water, electricity, transport. It’s going to be even more stretched. Even now we have burst pipes, traffic is a nightmare here.”
- How will new development impact local infrastructure?
- Mind increased pressure on EC and West Brompton stations

“Having a development which is completely parallel to EC. (...) No complementariness between the new development and EC”

- “It doesn’t matter how integrated this new thing is [the opportunity area], [anti-social behaviour] needs to be sorted, and it’s not been sorted. (...) People piss all over the front of our shop every single night, it doesn’t matter what the place looks like this just needs to stop.”
- “Do exactly what they [developers] say they’re going to do” rather than cutting things they have committed to

Positive precepts

Multiuse cultural spaces

Cockpit Theatre (hire room by the hour)

Point Gate Theatre at Aldgate East

Chelsea Theatre (cultural use indoors and outdoors)

The Scoop

The Westway Trust

Poplar Union

Tonybee Studios and Artsadmin

Wild by Tart

Parks and public spaces

Holland Park (grass and bushy area)

Greenmarket in New York's Union Square

Pavilion Road Chelsea

Findings from previous consultations

This section includes the initial insights drawn from previous consultations since 2012, when the Earl's Court and West Kensington Opportunity Area (ECWKO) Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) was adopted. The review provided a baseline for devising an early engagement strategy to inform the placemaking framework in 2022. It also provided a set of emerging themes for the project team to work on. These hypotheses were reworked as discussions with the community progressed, finally becoming the four key themes that structure the 2022 placemaking framework.

Key takeaways from previous consultations

Residents want any new planning document to acknowledge 2012 consultation

Any new guidance for the opportunity area should consider the whole Earl's Court neighbourhood and draw heavily from the previous Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) because of the extensive consultation that went into shaping it. Some locals say the 2012 document failed to "consider the needs of the existing community" such as green space and better retail provision. It also failed to emphasize design quality. According to a resident, "buildings envisaged for this space [in the 2012 proposal] are characterless and will be undistinguishable from other city developments around urban centres" (NLPR, 2020).

The Council should take a proactive approach to ensure benefits for the local community

Residents called on councils to safeguard their interests and provide more clarity on the short and long-term impacts of the proposals on existing communities (ECWKO SPD General comments, 2012).

Complete Earl's Court to enhance local character with green space, a better mix of retail, and opportunities to create a sense of community

Protecting heritage is residents' number one priority for new developments across the borough while green space is what the Earl's Court community need the most (NLPR, 2020). Building height and architectural style is also key. The ambition should be to "restore the human scale of Victorian urbanscapes" that "create a sense of community" (Character

Study, 2021). “The area is not a blank canvas with no history” as a resident said (NLPR, 2020).

Marry housing with non-housing and a venue to reinvigorate business

A new substantial cultural offer along with other non-residential uses “could breathe life back to businesses in the area” according to business owners (NLPR, 2020). Locals would like to see an uplift in business on Earls Court Rd as a result of developing the opportunity area.

Make it a place to experience culture and hospitality

Locals consider Earl’s Court “a place for concerts and events irrespective of the demolition of the [exhibition] centre. (...) It is known for its bohemian, inclusive atmosphere” (NLPR, 2020). More restaurant and leisure uses were the number one priority for change in November 2020 (NLPR, 2020). In 2021, residents expressed support for al fresco dining and seasonal events, markets and festivals (High Streets survey report, 2021).

Create new spaces to connect with nature, to exercise, and to meet neighbours

Although locals consider garden squares the “zenith of planning” and “inherent to the character of the area” (Character Study, 2021) because of their “social and community use” (NLPR, 2020), they are not open for all. The perceived lack of public green spaces for sports is backed by the fact that Earl’s Court and Courtfield have the fewest public green spaces compared to all other southern and central wards (Asset Mapping Report, 2020). The biggest nearby green space available is the Brompton Cemetery which is good for quiet contemplation and perhaps running although not for sports in general. The Earl’s Court Society have campaigned for a minimum five hectares park in the opportunity area (ECWKOA SPD General comments, 2012).

Active travel should focus on pedestrian safety by preventing conflicts with cycles, scooters

The location of Earl’s Court in relation to London and its unique architecture are locals’ favourites aspects of the neighbourhood (NLPR, 2020). However, connectivity within the area could be improved. Focus should be on safer pavements and improved pedestrian routes, and attention should be given to conflicts between pedestrians and cycles (NLPR, 2020). Therefore, locals feel that active travel should be encouraged although focused on walking. Desired new routes include: under A4 bridge to Tesco; under the Lillie Canal Bridge to West Brompton station; step free access to Earl’s Court station through tunnel under Warwick Rd; new cycle route, cycle parking, and improved walkway on Warwick Rd (NLPR, 2020).

General support for development although traffic is major concern

The exhibition centre site was the most cited place for redevelopment across the borough recently (NLPR, 2020). Overall, the message was that “the community are concerned with the safety of traffic in this area and want to see the exhibition centre be given a new life” (NLPR, 2020).

Valued buildings

As listed by consultees in the Character Study 2021 consultation.

- **Earl's Court Village:** "Quiet and undisturbed by traffic. Pretty houses and trees. colourful houses a reminder of Victorian Past."
- **Kenway Road near Kenway Passage:** "Just a few paces off the busy A4 red route, Kenway passage brings you to an alternative reality where well-tended hanging flower baskets hang on lamp posts and it's so quiet you hear nothing but bird song."
- **St Cuthbert's Church,** Philbeach Gardens: "A fabulous Grade I Arts and Crafts Church"
- **Earl's Court Road:** "Roses blossoming, even on the red route"
- **Earl's Court Square:** "Stunning Victorian terrace in Earl's Court Square, one of the most beautiful in west London"
- **Longridge Road corner with Nevern Road:** "Look south down to Nevern Square with its majestic tree cover. And then turn to look north: the trees go on and on, up Cromwell Crescent and Pembroke Gardens, and then through Edwardes Sq to Ken High Street. It's such a rich prospect. Does any cityscape with trees get better than this? And it's a million miles from the classic impression of Earl's Court."
- **Over Under Coffee Bar:** "One of Earl's Court's quirky local independent businesses."
- **Nevern Square garden:** "Good quality green space that I enjoy spending time in. The Christmas tree really brightens up dark Decembers!"
- **"Nevern Square** was built in the Arts and Craft style with the use of alternating red and yellow bricks with terracotta insets. The square has seen its share of misfortune but residents are fiercely proud of its architecture, and have replaced the railings around the square, and gradually cleaning the brickwork."
- **Brompton Cemetery** (Lodge, path, wildlife): "An oasis of peace and tranquillity; Tranquil location with variety of wildlife. Well kept."
- **The troubadour:** "The Troubadour should be listed"
- **Kensington Primary Academy School**
- **Zaha Hadid billboard**

Previous consultation sources

Character Study: response forms, RBKC, Jun 2021

Character Study: virtual room responses, RBKC, Jul 2021

Community Asset Mapping Report, RBKC, March 2020

Culture Plan: 2020-2021, RBKC

ECWKOA Joint SPD Consultation Responses: General comments, RBKC, 2012

ECWKOA Joint SPD Consultation Responses: Housing Strategy, RBKC, 2012

ECWKOA Joint SPD Consultation Responses: Urban form strategy, RBKC, 2012

ECWKOA Joint SPD Consultation Responses: Vision & Objectives, RBKC, 2012

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Future High Streets Programme: Free text responses, Commonplace, Dec 2021

Future High Streets Programme: residents' workshops report, MutualGain, Oct 2021

Future High Streets Programme: Survey report, Commonplace, Dec 2021

Future High Streets Programme: toolkit phase 1, Centre for London, Dec 2021

New Local Plan Review Issues Consultation: buildings & places liked by community, RBKC, Sep 2020

New Local Plan Review Issues Consultation: response to consultation, RBKC, Sep 2020

New Local Plan Review Phase 1 Report: online poll answer breakdown, Give my View, Nov 2020

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