The Earls Court Development Company (ECDC) is developing a masterplan and detailed design proposals for a 40 Hectare site in West London, the largest of its size in the capital.

Their approach to engagement with the local community is extensive and involves a number of programmes that reach out to more representative local people, working closely with them for an extended period leading up to a planning application and beyond.

As part of this approach, the Public Realm Inclusivity Panel (the PRIP) was set up to give a voice to local people who are not usually included in development projects and to work with them for at least 12 months as the masterplan and detailed proposals are developed.

The group meets once a month and works closely with the design team. Using a creative approach the panel acts as a critical friend, inputting into the design brief and testing proposals as they are developed.

The workshop sessions so far have helped develop the skills of the group so they understand and engage with the complex challenges the masterplan needs to resolve. We have also explored a ‘people-first’ approach to thinking about the site and how it will deliver better spaces for people in the short, medium and long term.

This document introduces the PRIP, how they have been working and some of their achievements so far.

The panel is facilitated by ZCD Architects with support from Ciron Edwards.
The panel members

Bridget
Ben
Danah

Isaac
Karim
Mark

Lizzie
Lucy
Niamh

Nadine
Natasha
Ursula

Shirley
Suzanne

15 members of various ages and abilities

4 are members of local disability groups

7 are under 18

3 are members of other local groups

1 is a member of a local older people’s group

2 boroughs
London Borough of Hammersmith & Fulham and Royal Borough of Kensington & Chelsea
The panel started working together in July 2022 and have met seven times up to January 2023.

The panel are paid for their time, which includes a two hour session once a month and usually one hour of preparation or ‘homework’ in between.

Each session includes a variety of tasks, each designed to help explore a particular topic or issue.

As part of the work, the panel produced an Inclusivity Statement, which ECDC have endorsed.

The panel have created their own logo.

**INCLUSIVITY STATEMENT**

The Public Realm Inclusivity Panel (PRIP) are:
- a diverse group of local people, aged 15 and up, who have a range of lived experiences, requirements and support needs
- we are working together to help the Earls Court Development Company co-create a place:
  - that is both an everyday place and a special/exciting destination
  - that is inclusive, fully accessible and works well for people with disabilities, young people, older people and carers
  - that works for everyone that everyone can enjoy and spend time in
  - that is welcoming and embraces differences
- we are all equal and will work together to make sure everyone on the panel is heard.

We agree to:
- be respectful and accepting of each other’s ideas and experiences
- listen well and support each other
- be open in our communication and use different formats and languages
- represent others
We co-create a place

In their Inclusivity Statement, the panel have set out to ‘co-create a place’. This does not mean they are designing the masterplan, that is the job of the design team. Instead, the panel use creative techniques to consider ways in which spaces need to support a variety of needs.

For example, working in pairs they produced collage models of Community Gardens, and thought about the proximity of uses and the challenges and opportunities these throw up.

Different members of the design team attend each session. To start off with it was about just listening, but soon they were able to bring design proposals to share with the panel and get their feedback.
We represent others

A key approach is to harness what is called lived experience. We use this to start discussions about how each member of the panel feels about the Earls Court area now and what they would like to see on the masterplan.

But, the personal lived experiences of 15 people can never be truly representative. So as well as talking about themselves, each member has developed a character to help broaden the idea of lived experience and to allow them to draw on other characteristics and needs. The characters aren’t ‘real’ people, but each panel member has created them from real people that they know.

The benefit of working with these characters means our discussions are less personal and more incisive.
Everyone on the panel is heard

As well as using creative techniques, such as collage, model making and writing, we ask the panel members to give short presentations of their work and their thinking. We give every member the time to present their work to the rest of the panel and the design team, and then ask another member to give a positive feedback on what they have heard.

Often we use their characters to tell the story of how a space can be enjoyed, and what needs to be avoided. A level of complexity and nuance is introduced which is authentic and real.

This approach is building the skills of the members so that they are all able to talk confidently about the project.
Discussions

EVERYONE has been able to share their ideas even if they might contradict another and if there is a disagreement we’ll eventually come to an agreement. I enjoy that the sessions aren’t that long but they’re long enough for us to get through a lot.

SUZANNE Panel member, Old Age group member

I like the interactive nature of the sessions. I also like how it actually feels as if our words are being listened to and being used to create a better space for everyone.

URSULA Panel member, ECYC group member

I have been able to understand how we could effect our community.

We listen well and support each other

As well as presentations we have group discussions.

Sometimes this is whole group feedback.

Sometimes we use a Question Box, so that people can ask questions anonymously (no question is too stupid).

The group strives to work together well and make sure that everyone can understand and take part.

Each session provides ECDC and the design team clear inputs that they then feed into their proposals that can be presented back in a following session.

We have listened to feedback and improved presentations so that they are easier to understand.

We will also taken on board suggestions for future sessions.
We get outside

As we were setting up the panel we held a series of walking tours with local groups so that they could show us their local area. We visited Normand Park, North End Road, West Brompton Cemetery, Earls Court Road and places that were further afield.

We ran six tours with young people, older people, carers and people with disabilities. We used mapping analysis and discussions to think about what works well and what doesn’t in the local area.

We have been able to take some of the group onto the Earls Court site to see the scale of the project.

As the days get longer in 2023 we will be able to make more trips to see other places close by.
What happens next?

The panel enjoys working together and we are all looking forward to more monthly sessions in 2023.

We will use new creative techniques for exploring the issues and the proposals and we will work more with the Phase 1 architects to look closely at the buildings.

We will explore in more detail diversity, disability and gender, and will think about how these and other often overlooked issues combine to create challenges for people.

We hope to invite more guests into the sessions and start to have conversations with other stakeholders on the project.

The panel will continue to have a strong voice on the project and have their input taken on board.
WHAT THE PANEL HAS ACHIEVED

OVER 350 MINUTES
of group discussions

37
presentations from
panel members,
individual and group

1 SITE VISIT

to the Earl’s Court site,
though multiple site visits
were carried out at the 1st
phase of engagement

117 INSTAGRAM POSTS
with thoughts and ideas of
panel members as part of
their homework

10
Out of 15 panel members
have attended all 7
sessions

13 OUT OF 15
Panel members feel their
voice is being heard.

13 OUT OF 15
Panel members think
the process feels quite
inclusive
The Earls Court Development Company (ECDC) is an Earl's Court based business, responsible for driving the regeneration of the 40 acre-site, former Earls Court Exhibition Centre site on behalf of the Earls Court Partnership Limited – a joint venture between Delancey (on behalf of its client funds and the Dutch pension fund manager, APG) and Transport for London (TfL) that was formed in December 2019. 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. ECDC has a vision 'to bring the wonder back to Earls Court' with a masterplan which opens up the site to the local community, celebrates the legacy of world-class ingenuity, creates a better piece of city, and responds to the climate emergency. We are committed to working with communities and stakeholders from day one, ensuring the operation of ECDC and the masterplan support the generation of social value and economic inclusion across the local community throughout the lifetime of the project.

ZCD Architects are specialists in child and youth engagement. Our work is underpinned by a large body of observational research and direct engagement with children and young people. Our role on the Earls Court masterplan has been to facilitate creative sessions for the Public Realm Inclusivity Panel and to work closely with the design team and client to make sure the panel have their voices heard and have an impact on the masterplan.

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