

# Summary of summer engagement events

SEPTEMBER 2021



The  
Earls Court  
Development  
Company

Celebration / Collaboration / Consideration

# The Earls Court Development Company



## 1. Introduction

The Earls Court Development Company are responsible for driving forward the development of the Earls Court site.

We are developing a brand-new plan for the area, that will give the community the opportunity to shape how the site comes back into life.

As part of this, we are conducting a comprehensive consultation with the local community and key stakeholders.

The first part of this involved understanding what people think about the area, and what they would like to see in any future development on the site. After undertaking an early listening exercise over the summer of last year, we have now started next phase of consultation to understand local priorities. To achieve this, we held three events over the summer to gather feedback from the local community on the Earls Court site, which will help feed into the design team's early plans, and to make local people aware of the opportunity on the site.

The three events took place at the below venues and dates:

- The Pleasure Garden at Warwick Road Apron (opposite Earl's Court Tube exit) - Tuesday 17<sup>th</sup> August, 3.00pm-7.00pm
- Mund Street Green, West Kensington and Gibbs Green Estates - Saturday 21<sup>st</sup> August, 1.00pm-4.00pm
- The Pleasure Garden at Warwick Road Apron (opposite Earl's Court Tube exit) - Tuesday 24<sup>th</sup> August, 3.00pm-7.00pm

In total, approximately 360 people attended the three events. This can be broken down as:

- Tuesday 17<sup>th</sup> August – approx. 120
- Saturday 21<sup>st</sup> August – approx. 130
- Tuesday 24<sup>th</sup> August – approx. 110

At each event, members of the project team were on hand to discuss the plans and answer any questions that attendees had as well as collect feedback from people and ask what they would like to see brought into the local area. There were also a number of activities to attract people to the events, including games, bouncy castles and food and drink.

We also used the three events to distribute complimentary London Wonderground tickets to local people who attended.

## 2. Promotion

The events were advertised through a 4-page flyer that was hand delivered to 19,000 households and businesses within a mile radius of the development site. In addition, bespoke invitations providing details of the pop-up events with the flyer attached was also distributed to local political and community stakeholders.



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The events were also advertised to the local community with large, laminated posters in the neighbouring streets to where the events were taking place as well as on prominent locations adjoining the Earls Court site, throughout the West Kensington and Gibbs Green Estates and in the windows of local businesses.

All three events were advertised across the ECDC social channels prior to, and live at the events, as well as on the website ([theearlscourtdevelopmentcompany.com](http://theearlscourtdevelopmentcompany.com)).

During the events on Tuesday 17 August and Tuesday 24 August at Warwick Road Apron, the team also took flyers down to the London Wonderground site to encourage visitors leaving the venue to go and visit the summer event and find out more about the project.



### 3. Feedback

During all three events, members of the project team, including representatives from ECDC, architects Hawkins Brown and Studio Egret West, and our communications and consultation agency London Communications Agency were present to engage in conversations with attendees, provide information about why the event was taking place, and encourage them to provide feedback via the online commonplace survey, which was accessible to via iPads on the ECDC information stand.

The feedback provided below is a summary of the conversations that team members had with members of the public, which have been categorised into the main themes that frequently came up as well as some other general comments of interest that were made. This feedback was collated by team members by writing notes during the events following conversations and does not include feedback from the Commonplace surveys, which are still live and ongoing.

The top five themes noted from the engagement events were: disappointment about the empty site and a desire to see some progress; the need for green space; housing; leisure activities; and better connectivity. This document provides a breakdown of each of these themes, alongside some examples from respondents.



### 4. Key themes

**A desire to see something happen on the empty site**



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The longevity of the project from the initial Capco ownership, the convoluted and controversial planning process and the demolition of the Earls Court Exhibition Centre was a recurring theme in conversation between the project team and residents. Some people were not aware that the Earls Court Development Company now owned the site and as a result were surprised that the masterplan development will still take several years to be brought forward.

The majority of attendees that raised this issue were hungry for progress and development to be made and were keen for ECDC to deliver this. However, some residents were eager to see plans to understand what building heights and density would be and in what style these buildings would be designed. Those who were aware of Capco's previous ownership welcomed 'a new start' but still wanted to see quick progress made on site – we met a number of young professionals who said they had specifically bought in the area because of the redevelopment plans.

Several local families with young children said they were hopeful for the future and were generally excited about what the development could do to the area but were keen for work to be started sooner rather than later. An older man who had lived in the area for ten years said he would need to see plans before he could pass judgement, but also stated that in his view there is a need to build something soon.



## Green space

Many local residents made note that the free outdoor public spaces in the area were few and far between. A resident from Nevern Square with children said that the Warwick Road area lacks open green space and the nearest place she can go to take her children is Kensington Gardens – a bus ride away. Those who had garden key access could use these private spaces, but activities and leisure options within these spaces are strictly regulated.

The majority of green space in the surrounding area is gated and closed to those who don't live in the right properties. Residents made note of the increasing importance of outdoor space over the last year and a half and were keen that creating these spaces would be a priority for ECDC. However, it was also stressed by multiple people that these spaces should be designed in a way that does not encourage anti-social behaviour. The work that ECDC had done to reopen the site at Warwick Road 'The Pleasure Garden' in partnership with the K+C Festival was appreciated by a number of attendees; we were told by a number of families that their children enjoyed the grass and flowers and space to play and ride their mini scooters / bikes.

Meanwhile, many residents made note that there was nowhere suitable to walk dogs. The local parks that are free do not have fenced areas meaning that dogs cannot be let off their leash. This was a concern shared by residents living in Normand Park and the West Kensington estate. Another local resident stated that there wasn't any green space within easy access for them to go running in.



## Housing

Access to affordable housing was a key theme with local residents at all three events. Whilst residents acknowledged rising house prices across London over recent years, they expressed concerns about how high these will rise in Earl's Court. A local resident that



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works for TfL and has worked in the area for over 20 years was worried that her young family would have to leave the area after being priced out.

Reverend Lesley Bilinda from St Andrew's Church echoed these concerns as one of the main problems facing the area. Similarly, a family of four living in a one-bedroom flat nearby hoped to see more affordable housing within the ECDC development. Conversely, there were a few of people at the Warwick Road Apron event who vociferously expressed opposition to any council/ housing association provision, saying that priority should be given to military veterans or that there simply shouldn't be any social housing at all.

Some people noted their objections to the recently approved development on 334-350 Old Brompton Road.



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## Leisure activities

A lack of leisure activities for people of all ages was a common topic in conversations with the community. Some residents made note of the exhibition centre being demolished and replaced with no alternative for people to enjoy the area.

Whilst there are existing youth clubs and Scout troupe in the area, most people did express the need for more activities for young residents who live in the areas around the site. A mother with young children and a teenager said that there needed to be more opportunities for teenagers. Jennifer, an older lady living in Philbeach Gardens said that a free social club for residents should be opened with a focus on mother/baby classes, exercise classes, and arts and crafts activities.

Other leisure facilities mentioned as currently lacking by attendees included a cinema, with residents noting that there was no cinema in walking distance to Warwick Road unless travelling to Westfield or Fulham Broadway. A resident of the Gibbs Green Estate said that there would be a desire for a small cinema. Other residents suggested a bowling alley or ice rink. It should be noted that as with 'green space' above, many residents consider the area to have little of interest to them "within walking distance" and many rely on buses to get to simple things such as shopping or going to a park, with many making the journey all the way to Holland Park.



## Local retail



A number of residents, particularly those attending the Warwick Road Apron events, commented on the need for better retail to meet local needs without needing to get public transport to other areas. Whilst there is extensive local needs retail on North End Road and, particularly with North End Road Market, it was clear that residents either weren't aware of, or weren't willing to walk to, North End Road.

## Connectivity and public transport

A large number of attendees wanted to discuss the general connectivity of the area, with some explaining how useful it is having Earls Court, West Kensington and West Brompton tube stations nearby as well as Earls Court station providing east-west connections. Yet it was pointed out that the closed nature of the ECDC site made it impossible to easily walk between the stations, or between the communities on either side.



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In regard to other means of public transport provided currently, some residents commented that they felt the area had very good connectivity, as ‘everything is a walk or bus ride away’. Another local resident commented that the re-development of our site will greatly improve the east-west travel distances, which is something most local people will benefit from by being able to ‘cut through’ the site to walk or cycle to the local stations. An avid walker (scout leader) suggested that the ability to walk to the river and the local parks was particularly enjoyable.

A local resident from the Gibbs Green estate said the Earl’s Court station is more useful to them than West Kensington station, but because of the travel time from the estate currently, they use West Kensington Station primarily. The resident also noted that he cycles around the area quite a bit even though the roads are busy, and he might want to cycle through the future site and lock his bike near Earl’s Court station.

## 5. Common misconceptions encountered

Additionally, we have analysed the five top misconceptions shared by residents during the three events:

- The Earls Court Development Company still plan to demolish the West Kensington and Gibbs Green Estates
- The project is led by the council, and Capco still own the site
- London Wonderground is owned by The Earls Court Development Company
- The development project will be responsible for improving the surrounding traffic issues or transport infrastructure
- Confusion about where the funding is coming from, and the makeup of ECDC – a number of attendees referred solely to Delancey



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## Other feedback

The below section highlights summarised quotes and comments of particular interest outside the most common themes:

- *Had no idea there was any development coming forward but said the area needs a bit more life so was pleased to see something happening. Looking forward to seeing more detailed plans. Thought all the colours of the Pleasure Garden installation were 'amazing'.*
- *They should put a big boat or something on Warwick Road Apron.*
- *More convenience better quality options needed. Concern over noise and late-night uses. Concern for drainage strategy and desire to see integration of SUDS. Opportunities for play within landscape, specifically mentioned outdoor bouldering for its accessibility i.e., no courts, bookings etc. They miss the Exhibition Halls but agreed that you wouldn't put something similar back.*
- *Comment that Earl's Court had a proud LGBT history and they would like to see this reflected in the masterplan in some way*
- *Business owner of Pedal Back Cycling mentioned having very much enjoyed the summer events. Although they did not bring direct footfall to her shop, the renewed liveliness, especially after COVID, was overall perceived as a benefit*
- *Comment that "anything that happens here is better than what's there", which "currently is nothing."*

