

3.2

The 21st Century High Street

“It’s packed with quirky, high quality independent shops, but the high street offers more than just retail. The bars, cafés and restaurants make it a meeting place, while cultural and community centres encourage learning and enterprise. The character of the high street changes from the relaxed, homely bustle of North End Village through the creative buzz of Whitley Square and its exhibitions and events to the refined elegance of Exhibition Square.”

[Earls Court 2030 Time Out Guide – myearlscourt.com]

The vision outlined above, for the main high street in the new Earls Court sums up what is a common vision for an ideal high street - a vibrant cultural offer with distinctive retail in the kind of place people want to hang out. But in the real world, to what extent is this realisable?

The British Retail Consortium’s 2009 report “21st Century High street – a new vision for our town centres” states that the High street is living through a period of crisis, even ‘tough times’. This is true of even the most successful city centres: many of them are suffering from:

- A drop of consumer confidence
- Falling property prices
- On-going vacancy of shop fronts
- And a general sense that the high street has lost its way.

The consortium has a structured, reasonably practical toolkit, including creating a unique sense of place, building and maintaining an attractive public realm, planning for long term success, ensuring accessibility, safety and security, all backed up by a supportive Regulatory and Fiscal Regimes. Futurecity agrees with this.

But more is needed. The High Street also has to change to reflect 21st century consumer and urban identity. The 21st century high street is not just a physical retail space – it is going to become a social and psychological space, a meeting point, a hub, a route of exchange and experience. Retail, communal experience, work and enjoyment – these are activity themes that we see as marking the High Street experience. This presents a

practical set of challenges – how do we design energy, movement and empty space into the linear reality of shops and services, in such a way as to make the street a channel of energy?

The 21st century high street

The Earls Court High-street cannot afford to be Clone town. Lack of sociability and urban banality must be fought on all fronts. High street chic is not enough. And the sole answer cannot be hi-end special needs retailers and brands. They are all part of the mix. The real challenge is activity, not stuff. The 21st century high street cannot just be sales driven: events, communality and celebration must be in its DNA.

The trick to anticipating the future is to think future back, not present forward. We find it hard to think about the future and so we tend to think it’s like today but a little bit different which might be okay if change were linear. But it’s not, it’s exponential and that means it is less predictable, more complex, more volatile and more full of contradictions. We need to think differently to be different.

The High Street of the future will need to offer more than shops. It needs to offer convenience, excitement, and entertainment. It needs to make life easier and give a reason for travelling there. The Travel Retail sector seems to be a step ahead, perhaps anticipating the growth of travel hubs as result of time poor, public transport dependent shoppers.

The High Street needs to become more dynamic and flexible – create the offline equivalent of freshness to draw in repeat visitors.



London
GENERAL
Deptford Bridge 453

MARMITE
COOKBOOK

MARMITE
COOKBOOK

3.2

We are familiar with the idea of stores as destinations but think 'retail culture-tainment'. High Street outlets need to put on a show: this is about sensory experiences: art and culture mixed with personalisation, customisation, service and theatre. It's about being in tune with who your customers are and anticipating their needs, not just their product needs. Artists working with brands often lead the way in this process – artist Becky Shaw got it right for Westfield Shopping Centre during the World Cup with her “man crèche” project.

The EC project will need to utilise a dynamic menu of creative tools to animate and brand public space (note that that both of these are central to the success of the project). But the first step must be to define a singular vision for the Earl's Court High Street. Increasingly, the High street is a mirror image of the virtual world – and indeed ought to complement it. This means that the High street needs to offer:

- Product (whether goods, services or experience)
- Access (to physical and virtual space)
- and Emotion (or atmosphere – vehicle by music, aesthetics and communal experience).

The High street has to compete with the virtual world by playing on the unbeatable force of Lived Experience. Where possible, a set of challenging brand standards needs to be imposed even on the standard offer. Additional to this, a programme of distinctive sites and activities need to be progressively introduced to the site to enable it to be branded and marketed as special. These might include:

- Unique: i.e. surprising, singular aesthetic, products and events on the high street
- Specialised: i.e. people will travel across London for it
- Novel: i.e. the first time it can be seen/ accessed anywhere...
- Dynamic: i.e. a youthful and energetic offer (note, not necessary a Youth Offer. The blurring of generations needs to be a feature of thinking through the offer)
- Revolving: i.e. curated and changing so as to create a sense of fluid urban activity
- Aesthetic: i.e. all street choices must look good
- Inspirational: i.e. must make the resident feel good
- “Live”: i.e. a rolling programme of events, performances
- Celebratory: i.e. not just retail focussed but also aiming to bring together via shared events

- Communal: i.e. an awareness of the village/civic possibilities inherent in safe, shared space

Three approaches are recommended as part of the strategy to enhance and add value to the High Street as a rich experience zone:

1. Artisan Boulevard

Artists lead the way in generating local vibrancy as well as new approaches to space use. A concentrated cluster of artist work/showcase spaces, or an 'Artisan Boulevard' would bring artists and makers to Earls Court High Street. In turn this will help to market the site to businesses and residents attracted by the vibrant, creative ambiance.

Ground floor spaces will front onto the main High Street. The spaces could be designed for painters, dancers, sculptors, musicians and photographers, as well as designer-makers like jewellery makers, silversmiths, goldsmiths, furniture makers, fashion designers, bespoke tailors, ceramicists and small-scale printing and publishing firms.

These spaces could be open to the street, putting the artists at the heart of the public life of the High Street, open to questions or the public wandering into their workspaces. All units could utilise a WI-FI hotspot, enabling the high street to become an open office. Many will support direct retailing to local residents, workers and visitors. The Boulevard will draw people to the high street, boosting footfall at the on-site cultural facilities and restaurants, cafes and shops, to create a genuine place that residents will be drawn to.

2. '@Earls Court' Culture Brand

- Creative retail offer
- Independent, non-chain offer
- Evolving/changing offer

Despite the recession, we live in a boom era for the creative arts, and with government emphasis on creative activity being a driver of our future economy, the importance of implementing frameworks which allow for public creative experiences and opportunities will grow. Audiences for museums and galleries have grown exponentially over the last decade, whilst those museums and galleries have also started to exploit the power of their brand name to roll out merchandise, 'branches', 'models' and 'packages' globally.

Museums and galleries are leaders in this field, trading on the cultural currency of

3.2

their established brand names, developed (in many cases) over centuries. This is the age of the cultural 'super brand' – a diverse range of institutions are increasingly realizing the value of their blue-chip brand 'cultural currency'. These institutions are developing new models to expand their profile, lending their programming methodology to other global cities or starting entirely new overseas branches: Tate, the Victoria & Albert Museum, Frieze, the Louvre, the National Trust and the Guggenheim are all involved in exploring new ways to disseminate their brand.

A further, and more notable development is the steady convergence of cultural super brands and the retail sector. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York has 20 stores across the US and 17 internationally and has a major programme of retail expansion. The concept MoMA Design Store has just opened in Tokyo. Tate Modern retail turnover was £15 million in 2009/10. V&A retail turnover was £12 million in 2006/07 and is now looking to establish an exhibition centre in Blackpool. To be branded "V&A at Blackpool", it would be in an iconic new seafront building near the Blackpool Tower. Meanwhile, The National Trust aims to open up 20 new high street stores over the next three years.

We are all used to the concept of Starbucks Coffee shops selling acoustic and easy listening CD's, but licensing agreements have also recently seen Science Museum products in Marks & Spencers and Currys with sales growing at 138% at the latter last year. The Natural History Museum sells through Marks & Spencer and Argos. The V&A sells at John Lewis. Cultural super brands are increasingly filtering onto the high street.

Imagine these cultural super brands housed in Earls Court high street as part of a retail experience offer. Carluccio's could exclusively sell Tate products, in keeping with it's more modernist interior aesthetic, Wagamama could sell Serpentine Gallery merchandise. Both sets of merchandise would be exclusive to these specific Earls Court branches within London. That fact would differentiate these particular Carluccio's and Wagamama branches as offering something different, as having 'added value'.

To capitalise on difference, these stores would be noted as chain retail outlets, but with an 'added extra' through the simple addition of an '@Earls Court' addition to the end of their identity.

The @Earls Court offer is not just a commercial retail opportunity, but also a community engaged

programming offer – creative programmes need to be embedded into the retail offers in order to create something 'different' that visitors to Earls Court will want to experience or utilise: activities and experiences people value and which cannot be found anywhere else in London is what will draw the public to the development.

The idea of a culture brand concept could influence a two-afternoons-a-week Giraffe Art Club for kids for instance. By using the model of the Tate galleries 'Art Trolley' (effectively four trolleys of art materials and equipment, each staffed by an education intern who sets the 'making programme' for that afternoon), you effectively have an activated, programmed crèche concept.

An evening Jazz club at a family restaurant? Or a Quiz night? Adult art class sessions, a wine club with tasting evenings, a knitting club or laptop music collaborative sessions, or website building classes (easily achievable through freelance specialists and laptop technology – nearly every restaurant and cafe has wi-fi broadband as part of their offer). Or perhaps an 'Art Bar', which utilizes big screen video projection technology as part it's décor. This model already exists in Stockholm. The Nordic Light Hotel features a bar, which constantly runs programmes of good experimental film and archive documentary material. It presents an opportunity to experience high culture in an informal setting, and is hugely popular as a result.

Please see 'Appendix 3: Case Study - Pizza Express, Dean Street' at the rear of this document for an example of this approach. Guidelines for the '@Earls Court' brand alliance package:

- Create a forum which public and landlords can sign up to take an active role in, to create a vision for the long term programming of the @Earls Court alliance
- What do local people actually want to see?
- What will they use? Photography classes, or a 'toy library' at a family restaurant?
- What are the limitations for the chain managers?
- How can these be overcome?
(Programming does not have to be invasive or require great amounts of extra infrastructure and health and safety requirements. It can be as simple as a professional leading a learning group with a single laptop)
- Build a partnership of residents, communities, artists, businesses, the education sector and the many technicians of public programming
- Position @Earls Court as a culture club,

3.2

- an exclusive offer of different kinds of experience beginning as a forum website that all key stakeholders sign up to
- Ensure there is a dialogue around the vision described above
 - Develop design guidelines that accentuate the value of the @Earls Court alliance as an arena for learning, display and presentation and create an agency in Earls Court with responsibility for cultural advocacy and delivery of the @Earls Court partnership
 - Develop advantages to being a member of the @Earls Court alliance; banner advertising incentives, landlord assistance in event organization
 - Promote user group 'ownership' of each concept: The giraffe Art Club for kids should accept parent volunteers who want to help run it, or help develop ideas of what is made, what projects children are set; community involvement and ownership will drive the @Earls Court concept into new ideas, new programming ideas

3. "Eventology"

The high street needs to be flexible enough to accommodate events and performance activity. This will not just happen "spontaneously" – it needs to be curated and initiated. But it also needs space that can be adapted to different kinds of usage. This can be designed in, in such a way as to not conflict with the main high street goals, but remain in the background as an "option". Approaches might include sunken performance areas, awning/platform areas, infrastructure to allow the rapid deployment of lighting/sound and seating.

Events foster neighbourhoods

Neighbourhoods are places where people feel a sense of shared belonging. Events such as the existing Earls Court festival, public performances, showcases, concerts and productions all gather the like-minded and curious to share experiences. These shared experiences and shared ways of seeing strengthen the fabric of community and foster neighbourhoods. In new developments, such as Earls Court, interventions which create opportunities for events can accelerate the process of community building which may not happen at all if left to happenstance. Events bring people together.

As opportunities for sharing experiences and ways of seeing, events can foster "neighbourly values" - street parties or community festivals calls on neighbours to meet, negotiate, contribute, transact and share.

These interactions often promote resonant feelings of pride, contribution and reward in individuals which multiply when shared across communities.

See something special

Events exist in addition to the ordinary. They are special moments that positively interrupt the day-to-day. Earls Court's history of temporary events has provided these stories in the past, not just through the content of the event themselves, but in the sometimes incongruous juxtapositions they create (a Yoga Show on the same weekend as the UK Erotica Exhibition). Communicating moments of wonder and delight seen in (literally) extraordinary events create the stories that communicate the narrative of a place.

"You'll never guess what I saw outside my front door on the way to work this morning. Where that great busker normally stands on the walk to the station, there was an amazing string quartet. They were handing out leaflets about a festival of Russian music in Earls Court this weekend. I'm definitely going. Want to come too?"

Bring the world in

The Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea, and London Borough of Hammersmith and Fulham have a cosmopolitan mix of communities, and London itself has over 300 languages spoken representing pretty much every community from across the globe. Events offer the opportunity to highlight one or more of these communities. Earls Court's location, as London's first new community when travelling from the gateway of Heathrow, makes sense of a programme of events which highlight this global connection. Bringing the world into Earls Court, in, for instance, a festival of Portuguese food, Iranian literature, Scandinavian design or Indian dance, would enrich the new villages of Earls Court, deepen the new developments links with locally represented communities, draw audiences from across the metropolis and deepening the distinctiveness of Earls Court brand, as a place comfortable with its international links.



3.3

Public Space: The Lost River Park

“The character of this innovative park changes from formal landscaping with seasonal planting and sculpture in the north and south to a wilder and more natural feel in the centre. As the park skirts along the side of the Seagrave Road neighbourhood it becomes a haven for plant life and animals, and there are spaces for cycle routes, allotments, picnic spots and areas for children to play in and adults to practise yoga and aerobics.”

A major component of the Earls Court development is the re-definition of Counter’s Creek - an ancient tributary of the Thames - as The ‘Lost River Park’, an ecological parkland network extending all the way from Kensal Cemetery to the River Thames along the Creek’s original alignment.

Located directly above the West London Line, The Lost River Park plays a large part in the Earls Court landscape strategy. It would provide recreational and play spaces and new pedestrian routes, creating a green corridor, which connects to existing local green spaces and providing connectivity to existing habitats and wildlife. Its character will vary along its length in response to underlying constraints and opportunities.

The Lost River Park element of the Earls Court development provides a rich linear landscape experience, with easily accessible paths, routes and rugged nature trails for pedestrians and cyclists, the changing character encouraging residents to make use of the full length of the park whilst also holding the potential to attract visitors from neighboring areas.

Wayfinding can play a large part in this context, thematically developing knowledge of local ecology. Artists will be able to use landscape, infrastructure and signage to provide an intuitive parkland wayfinding system that will explore:

- Family space
- Quiet space
- Play spaces
- Sports pitches
- Cycling routes

These linear routeways interconnect with each other, ‘criss-crossing’ the length of The Lost River Park. The park’s unique linear habitat is further enhanced by the integration of key community elements positioned along its length. As a shared landscape, The Lost River Park has to demonstrate that all users are considered. While direct intuitive routes will be required by commuters on their way to the morning tube crush, the park at the same time offers an enhanced area of improvisable space.

Green routes, exploratory routes, quiet routes and links to the wider context will be explored and articulated through temporary and embedded activity trails, each with a different theme. The wayfinding trails programme will seek to assert the fine-grain of first-person experience, taking pedestrians off their predictable paths and reintroducing them into a new awareness of the urban landscape.

The Desire Path

In Finland planners are known to visit their parks immediately after the first snowfall, when the existing paths are not visible. People naturally choose desire lines, which are then clearly indicated by their footprints and can be used to guide the routing of paths.

Artist designed Ecology/Play/Heritage & Fitness Trails

Making leisure and commuting routes and people’s daily journey friendlier for pedestrians and cyclists is a city-wide ambition. The Mayor’s new Cycling Revolution London Initiative underpins the rationale for the Lost River Park Cultural Trails.

3.3

It is proposed that four distinct character trails could be established as part of our strategy to embed culture into the fabric of Earls Court: Ecology, Heritage and Fitness. The trails could guide people through the Lost River Park and connect to the urban and garden squares (where appropriate) to create an interlinked activity trail, which permeates the entire Earls Court scheme. The trails are fundamental in creating distinctiveness, visual wayfinding and information systems for the green areas.

Fully accessible, each trail will generate a range of interventions that celebrate the specific local ecology and history, as well as addressing current issues of “what it is to live in contemporary London”. The trails will establish connections, routes and intersections, natural meeting points and embed into the public realm the unexpected and remarkable.

The Ecology Trail could lead visitors and residents through the flora and fauna of the site and offer insights into the local landscape and native animal and plant life. Artists and designers could create a wayfinding system which will include parkland furniture, interpretation points, viewing stations, hides and nesting boxes - helping ensure that the development plays its part in sustaining the unique ecology of the green space. By creating modest sculptural bird watching hide structures (perhaps utilising reclaimed timber from site clearance), for instance, Lost River Park will host a 'useable sculpture trail' of absolute originality. Usable sculptures present an opportunity to place the local community at the centre of the project. Working with an artist the project would deliver a series of small, sustainable-build sculptural forms following the flow of Lost River Park in effect creating a 'sculptural necklace' of useable, yet highly individual and striking artist and community designed interventions.

The Play Trail does not necessarily mean expensive, maintenance intensive play equipment. A playground doesn't have to cost a million bucks and come in a box. In fact, it's better if it doesn't. Playscapes are under-recognized as an artistic medium. They are about sculpting the landscape to activate children's imaginations and should be as natural as possible, with as little man made components as possible, using native plants, topography and lots of trees. Playscapes are designed with the intent of bringing children and people back to nature. They offer a wide range of open-ended play options that allow children to be creative

and use their imagination. A series of grass covered hillocks or wave-like forms can create platforms to jump from, highly coloured floor elements incorporated into sculpted land-forms can create hidden pathways or imaginary kingdoms.

The greatest barrier to outdoor play in the UK as identified by 8–13 year olds is a lack of safe and clean play areas near to their homes. They wanted to have more interesting things to do such as better play environments and activities, places to meet friends and grounds to use outside school hours. Designating specific areas in which children can play in is considered to be the best way to prevent them being stopped from playing for no reason.

The Lost River Park offers a chance to address this lack of imaginative play space by introducing artist led playscape design initiative developed in association with the project landscape engineers.

Please see 'Appendix 4: Tulsa's Undercroft playground – Case Study' at the rear of this document for an example of this approach.

The Heritage Trail will present records of human history on the site going back 700 years, culminating in the industrialisation of the area in late 19th century. These layers of history will run through the Heritage Trail in text and images animating the history of the site from 1362 to present day and creating a time line for The Lost River Park. The materiality of the trail will be informed by the lost river story – which in itself is the story of London and urbanization, as many such rivers have been covered over. Wayfinding, seating interpretation and a text trail will be integrated into the entire length of this Trail, linking it into the Broadway.

The Fitness Trail offers a unique opportunity for an artist to inform the feel, texture and animation of the trail and thereby create a place for people of all ages, abilities and degrees of fitness to consider engaging in some form of healthy activity. The trail could host fitness equipment, create space for relaxation where activities from shadow-boxing to yoga can be enjoyed in a new community resource. The Fitness Trail celebrates the culture of sport and can even step outside the Lost River Park (for instance acting as the destination for longer runs or cycle rides, and so will seek to establish links and routes that reach out beyond the parkland's physical boundaries.

3.3

Reclaim Public Space, Use It Better: High Line Linear Park, NYC:

The New York High Line was built in the 1930s, as part of a massive public-private infrastructure project called the West Side Improvement. It lifted freight traffic 30 feet in the air, removing dangerous trains from the streets of Manhattan's largest industrial district.

No trains have run on the High Line since 1980. Friends of the High Line, a community-based non-profit group, formed in 1999 when the historic structure was under threat of demolition. 'Friends of the High Line' works in partnership with the City of New York to preserve and maintain the structure as an elevated public park.

High Line Art is marked by newness and freshness, with an emphasis on site-specific experience trails in art and fitness that respond to the uniqueness of the High Line in form, structure and concept.

The projects core goals are to provide and facilitate opportunities for audiences to enhance their linear walking journey through the green raised parkland with a range of interventions throughout the linear journey in the form of small art installations, sculptural benches, fitness equipment and small performance/viewing spaces.

The interventions aim to further enhance the excitement and uniqueness of the High Line and to reinforce New York City, and in particular, the neighbourhood around the High Line, as a vital cultural center.

High Line Art Commissions

The principal component of High Line Art, this ongoing program commissions new artwork by artists at varying stages in their careers for temporary presentation on, in, under, and near the High Line. The work commissioned can fall under almost any genre or medium including, but not limited to, sculpture, painting, graphic arts, sound, video, spoken performance, and dance.

The first in the commission series: 'The River that Flows Both Ways', is a bank of colored glass windowpanes along New York's 'High Line' railway tunnel over Chelsea Market.

Spencer Finch's works constantly seek to unveil the nature of light, colour, perception, and memory. For the High line, he took one day to photograph the Hudson River's surface 700 times, taking one shot every minute. These images have been transferred onto 700 panes of glass and placed onto pre-existing windows, which have been installed in the semi-enclosed tunnel between 15th and 16th streets, above the New York City streets, a location from which the river can be seen.

The piece, which uses a single pixel point from the photographs for each pane of glass, is a study on the ever-changing color of water. The tunnel itself transforms throughout the day as the levels of light shift with time. The title is the translation for the Native American name of the Hudson River, Muhheakantuck.

High Line Art Partnerships

This program allows Friends of the High Line to collaborate with other organizations throughout the city to present a wide range of events on the High Line. Like High Line Art Commissions, these projects are flexible; they may present visual art, performance, dance, or other experimental genres.

High Line Art and Public Programmes

Friends of the High Line runs a dynamic schedule of programs designed to engage, educate, and enrich a diverse audience of all ages. A portion of these programs focus on High Line Art and broader issues relating to public art, and feature artists, curators, art historians, and other arts professionals.



8-14
March
2007

ARTfutures

SPACE

3.4 The Broadway

“This grand tree-lined boulevard gradually changes in character from the dramatic office blocks of West Kensington Village in the north to the more intimate, residential feel of West Brompton Village in the south. With mansion flats and apartments mixed in with work and retail spaces, its energy doesn’t simply disappear after office hours.”

Character

Like the High Street, the Broadway’s character changes along its length. In the north, the Broadway is stately and sophisticated in character, with wide pavements lined with flower-beds framing contemporary designed workspaces. It is an area that feels quietly luxurious. As the Broadway approaches the High Street it becomes more lively in character and more varied in appearance. At the crossroads with the High Street, there is a cluster of tall buildings to the west. To the east, a series of below ground spaces will be devoted to leisure.

Features

- Architecturally the Broadway reflects its role as a grand thoroughfare, with buildings appropriate in scale and mass to a great commercial and residential avenue.
- Wide pavements and careful attention to street design make the Broadway a pleasant place for a stroll, despite its busy traffic.

Culture

- Creative Enterprise Hub

Creative Enterprise Hub

Developing a unique ‘one-stop-shop’ showcase for the UK’s independent creative organisations and creating valuable links with UK wide creative partners.

The intersection of the Broadway and High street offers a potential centrepiece of the Earls Court placemaking strategy,

the proposed Creative Enterprise Hub will exhibit the best cultural output from studio collectives and creative initiatives across the UK, encouraging cross-disciplinary projects, attracting investors and sponsors and establishing Earls Court as the natural home for the UK’s creative sector.

There is a clear opportunity and need for this facility. Despite London’s position as world leader in this area, the UK does not have a centre of excellence specifically designed to showcase and promote the impressive creative output of our studio collectives and creative industry incubators. Yet there is huge demand: there are 572 institutions throughout the UK that offer studio space – they are hotbeds of creativity, the potential drivers of a new economy. The Creative Enterprise Hub is an opportunity to harness this talent.

The Creative enterprise Hub will provide a national hub for the creative sector, promoting the cream of UK talent and providing a central location for studio organisations such as jewellery maker incubators Cockpit Arts from South London, or iphone application development centre Spike island design of Bristol to promote and support new designers, artists and other creatives through a rolling programme of cultural events including exhibitions and trade fairs, an artists’ studio programme, innovation centres and possibly a residency programme for limited applicants, awarded through a competition format.

Through these activities, the Hub will:

- Help establish a social network of connected individuals to enliven and dynamise Earls Court.



3.4

- Attract key cultural institutions outside the artist studio sector, from museums and galleries to sponsors and stakeholders.
- Bring high profile visual and performing arts institutions to Earls Court.
- Provide a model for creative industry development in the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea and Hammersmith and Fulham.
- Help identify and nurture the next generation of cultural entrepreneurs in the creative sector.
- Provide a one-stop shop for the best of the UK arts talent, identifying and nurturing the next generation of cultural entrepreneurs.
- Enable high profile partnerships with UK Universities.
- Create strong links between the commercial and cultural sectors, helping industry to develop innovation and creativity, discover new talents and new ideas.

The initiative will benefit Earls Court:

- For economic reasons: the arts are a new high growth economic sector.
- For social reasons: the idea supports social and urban regeneration.
- For global reasons: the studio collectives and cultural organisations selected to use the facilities will offer entry to global markets.
- For knowledge reasons: the concept will support the knowledge economy.
- For investment reasons: the approach would attract those investing in the Earls Court regeneration area.

Cultural partnership is vital: these relationships offer an intelligent labour force, research opportunities, international status and links to the private sector and community. The Creative Enterprise Hub is a unique proposition and nothing like it exists. However, we can draw inspiration from:

- **Free Range**, Europe's largest graduate art and design show which runs over eight weeks in London's Brick Lane, and aims to

promote new creative talent. It showcases the work of designers and artists to the public and employers. Over 150,000 visited the last show, putting it on the same scale as a major exhibition at the Royal Academy of Arts.

However, sponsors remain small rather than the international brands UKAGC would attract.

Space for Innovation

Striking incubation workspaces for small single-person creative businesses would also be located within the Hub. Their close proximity to each other and larger collectives will help small companies work together, sparking ideas and creating networks, resulting in an exciting, stimulating and productive place to work.

The government's definition of creative industries is that they are those based on individual creativity, skill and talent. They also have the potential to create wealth and jobs through developing new ideas, products, or intellectual property. This is not just traditionally creative industries, such as film, music or the arts, but is also advertising, computer and video games, publishing, and software.

The sector has expanded throughout the downturn and looks set to continue its growth. The cluster will be a mixture of large and small businesses, with space for targeted public agencies that have 'gravitational pull' for creative businesses (for example FLAMIN, the artists film sponsorship wing of the Arts Council, or OFCOM).

To create this cluster, the Earls Court scheme will:

- Provide world class digital connectivity, e.g. comparable to SohoNet.3
- Use flexible design to allow the mix of businesses to evolve in response to business growth, cyclical economic change, and commercial viability.
- House small or 'lower value' creative businesses (for example individual artists and designer/makers) on flexible terms, perhaps as part of an incubation programme. These smaller businesses help to provide a sustainable mix for the site, which will help draw larger businesses.



4.1

The Four Villages: I. Earls Court Village

“Smart, elegant and genteel, Earls Court Village is a haven of civilised tranquility, framed by Exhibition Square, the start of the High Street and the grand, sweeping terraces of Warwick Crescent and Empress Crescent, which complement the neighbouring Victorian architecture. Cobbled courtyards, garden squares and quiet mews create a feeling of intimacy.”

Earls Court has been defined by its journey from village and countryside to urban centre. The area announces the beginning of urban London and also the departure.

Our brief to artists could therefore reflect the mix of a rural past and an urban future by providing an enhanced and striking new square for London, a new public space for Earls Court and a gateway for a further series of public spaces and amenities. We believe that the public is becoming more at ease with public display and live events are the next stage of London's evolution from a closed doors society to cafe culture society. The local community will have a new 21st century cultural destination for friends and visitors, one that will provide an amazing public space and a major new square, which is free to the visitor.

The Exhibition Square is an ideal location for events, performance and temporary culture. The square will become a showcase for live performance, projection and musical theatre, live music and dance, concerts and carnival. We will put into place the preparation and infrastructure needed to host large-scale events. A programmed series of events will animate key spaces within the square and will build onto the Earls Court Exhibition Centre 'showcase of excellence' brand

Exhibition Square could become a showcase for the best permanent and temporary public arts in London. Architects, landscape designers, artists and performers will all contribute to a new square for London, and look for inspiration to the great squares of Europe.

Exhibition Square could be launched with the unveiling of a spectacular large-scale public art commission as its centre piece. Providing

a distinct gateway to Earls Court and the main High Street, this major commission by a high profile artist will ensure a magnetic draw, welcoming the visitor into the new Earls Court development and offering a new London spectacle which will develop an international reputation as a 'must-see' public sculpture.

The main artwork could be supported by an ongoing series of sculpture commissions by major international artists that will enhance the image and quality of life in London. Our aim would be to provide a new place for London which builds on the temporary exhibition programme of Earls Court Exhibition Centre, setting out a comprehensive commissioning programme for the public realm, from fountains and embedded public art to street furniture and temporary events. The sculpture park will be part of a set out of cultural offers that will draw huge numbers of visitors to Earls Court, in a similar way to Millennium Park in Chicago (see case study) and promote the idea of a new creative district for London.

Art & Architecture

We see the need for a wayfinding strategy for Earls Court as a way of creating a 'joined up' brand identity for the whole site. The well documented history of the area, the colour and cultural identity of the local communities and the international identity of the area will help to provide a unique and authentic identity, which will help establish a unique identity for the area.

The Earls Court wayfinding commissions will involve designers and artists to help provide a distinct commissioned brand and a strong visual presence as part of the urban gallery concept. As part of a broader



4.1

connectivity strategy, wayfinding can establish connections, routes, intersections and natural meeting points, revealing the unexpected and remarkable using a mix of signage, public art and design to provide navigation, individual building/place names and public information points.

Additional visual navigational tools may include creative writing or quotations etched into the hard surfaces, roundels and drain cover, sculptural route markers, architectural features, the use of colour, seating, lighting, architectural details, gates, railings and bollards.

Exhibition Square will also provide a site for the first of a series of exhibition spaces promoting the best of the UK's arts, crafts and design. The project spaces will be programmed to provide a joined up necklace of exhibition spaces spread out throughout Earls Court with a working title of 'Chemistry'.

Culture

- Major Sculpture commissions
- Event & Performance
- Signage & Wayfinding trails guiding the visitor from gateway to the village heart
- Art & Architecture





4.2

The Four Villages: II. North End Village

“Inspired by the thriving North End Road market, this vibrant, multicultural urban village surrounds the more cosmopolitan end of the high street. Tree-lined landscaping along North End Road and street performers in Whitley Square will inspire a lively café culture by day. Open-air cinema screenings and a string of bars and restaurants will create a vivacious atmosphere by night.”

Character

North End Village feels intensely alive. It's a place to enjoy culture and nightlife, meet friends and learn as well as live. It has a more bustling, local feel than Earls Court Village, absorbing the character of today's North End Road market and adding more character with a mix of new shops selling everything from groceries and antiques to art materials.

Features

- A diverse mix of shops, which could include independent boutiques, hairdressers, laundrettes and a mini-supermarket could extend along North End Road and down High Street West
- The village will also include open space offering the opportunity to relocate North End Road market if residents and market traders want it to move
- A new pelican crossing will be built at the junction of Star Road and North End Road so cyclists and pedestrians will be able to continue their journey seamlessly from Star Road onto the new High Street
- It will have a range of communal facilities including a health hub and an enterprise centre
- There is significantly more residential property here than in the other villages, but the area has a surprisingly green feel as it is softened by garden squares, window-boxes, planted walls and green rooftops

Culture

— The Office of Possibility: Flexi work/learn/exhibition space

The variety and diversity of the new neighbourhoods is most apparent here. The area has a youthful, urban energy which hints at Hoxton and Shoreditch and contrasts with the more sedate Earls Court Village. It presents the perfect opportunity to nurture small, experimental start-up and creative companies.

Flexi Work/Learn Space: The Office of Possibility

Earls Court offers the rarest of opportunities: the chance to create a sustainable creative industry incubation model addressing the needs of creative entrepreneurs, and also the wider community that becomes the 'success story' for subsequent developments to follow. The idea is to create a dedicated creative industry space, home to an interconnected network of virtual online creative hubs and collections; The Office of Possibility.

Imagine a well-designed, intelligent working space with break out areas for separate cultural activity where virtual art collections and education programmes could be accessed through banks of computer terminals. A commercial, yet elegant 'open office' model; all the useable furniture in the space would be provided by young creative

4.2

industry designers - the space targets the designers key demographic, and so functions as a design 'showcase'. It is a multi-use flexi space with defined 'zones' for specific activity:

- A modern creative-information hub, which uses the architectural and interior design language of the retail and leisure industries. The hub could provide free computer access to hundreds of prestigious culture based university research libraries, film archives, visual art and literature collections through links to databases.
- A rich resource of local information and downloadable content for users beyond the creative community. The facility will encompass a Project Space with exhibitions programmed through partnership with the creative industry incubation project, and a rolling exhibition programme curated by each creative industry unit resident in turn showcasing the best of Earls Court's young creative talent.
- A small cinema area would function as multi-use space for screenings, group meetings, readings, and live band events. A 'Genius Bar' would be staffed by creative engineers or curators presenting talks and learning initiatives.
- An arts bar/café would encourage people to spend time and relax in the facility. Breakout learning and activity space and meeting areas for adult education. A children's area could programme age specific content on cheap 'net-books' (computers designed specifically for web access without built-in hard memory) in a friendly colourful setting.

could form an archive easily accessible on computer, or showcased on large screen projection. Indeed there are hundreds of 'virtual' online databases / collections / research resources / interactive programming organizations which could be utilized through subscription for the Office of Possibility. A few key examples:

- The Times digital archive: digitalization of every paper produced between 1785 and 2011
- TATE online: a rich art history / schools project resource. Also incorporates ongoing interactive programmes for child and adult learning
- The British Museum online: key collection artefacts plus background information on material by in-house experts and curators
- Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) / Cambridge University collaboration 'Open Course Ware': online open learning and research resource centre geared towards developing digital industries

Life-long learning for the Community

There are numerous opportunities for an Office of Possibility to partner London's cultural organisations. Earls Court has on its doorstep the British Library, which houses a formidable collection of Britain's most influential texts. An extended online database is part of University networks 'Literature Online' projects: a limited access database of over 25,000 works. This resource could be virtually housed within the new Office of Possibility, expanding an audience for literature.

As a further example of potential programming -Tate Gallery hold an extensive archive of '50's, 60's and '70's pioneering British film and video art they are keen to showcase. Through digital transfer, the films

4.2

Case Study: Idea Store Tower Hamlets, the library model rebooted.

In this multidisciplinary/project and virtual activity sense, the Office of Possibility follows a similar model to Tower Hamlet's 'Idea Store'. Idea Stores are more than just a library or a place of learning. As well as the traditional library service, they offer a wide range of adult education classes, along with career support, training, meeting areas, cafes and arts and leisure pursuits.

After consulting with local residents in the largest consultation exercise ever undertaken by Tower Hamlets Council it became clear that major investment was needed. The message from Tower Hamlets' households taking part in London's most comprehensive opinion survey about libraries was stark and simple: they wanted a high-quality, modern library service which provided a far greater range of services. Despite recognising the excellent effort of staff on behalf of residents, customers were dissatisfied with the quality, location and nature of the service they were getting.

The Secretary of State for the Department of Culture, Media and Sport, launched the groundbreaking Idea Stores concept in April 1999. Tower Hamlets, unveiled its plans to invest £20 million in library and learning services at a time when the national trend was to decrease funding. The idea became a reality in May 2002 when the first, prototype Idea Store opened at Bow.

This was followed by Idea Store Crisp Street in July 2004, Idea Store Whitechapel in September 2005 and Idea Store Canary Wharf in March 2006.

Idea Store Whitechapel funding agencies: Tower Hamlets Council, Tower Hamlets College, UK Online, European Regional Development Fund, London Development Agency, Cityside Regeneration, Surestart, Sainsbury Families Charitable Trusts.

Idea Store Canary Wharf funding agencies: Tower Hamlets Council, Canary Wharf Group, Learning and Skills Council, London Metropolitan University, Barclays, Tower Hamlets College.

