

Culture Strategy

Overview

Key Objectives

Explore the potential for a strategic leisure, cultural and visitor attraction in accordance with the Mayor's London Plan; and

Create a lively cultural destination with a variety of culture, arts and creative facilities that continues the Earl's Court 'brand'.

8.0 This chapter sets out requirements to create a cultural destination ~~consisting~~ of cultural facilities; associated uses, including artists' studios and space for creative industries; public art and hotels.

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Figure 8.1: Earl's Court Exhibition Centre 1

Context

8.1 Since the 1880s a variety of culture and entertainment activities, including various shows, exhibitions and a gigantic Ferris wheel, have taken place on the Earl's Court site giving it its cultural 'brand'. In the late 1930s, Earl's Court Exhibition Centre 1 (EC1) was opened to provide over 50,000m² of exhibition space. In the early 1990s Earl's Court Exhibition Centre 2 (EC2) was opened. The Earl's Court Exhibition Centres are internationally recognised for hosting significant cultural events, including the Brit Awards, world famous music concerts and various exhibitions / shows, such as the Ideal Home Show.

8.2 The Exhibition Centres will host the indoor volleyball during the 2012 Olympic Games, which will further reinforce Earl's Court as an international cultural brand.

8.3 The Exhibition Centres make a significant contribution to the local economy, as many shops, restaurants and hotels in the surrounding area benefit from the close proximity to this major visitor attraction.

Policy Context

8.4 The Mayor's London Plan (2011):

Earl's Court and West Kensington Opportunity Areas; and

'Support for and enhancement of arts, culture, sport and entertainment provision' (Policy 4.6).

8.5 LBHF's Core Strategy (2011):

'Strategic Policy FRA'; and

'Strategic Site and Housing Regeneration Area – FRA 1'.

8.6 RBKC's Core Strategy (2010):

'Earl's Court' (Policy CP10 and associated Vision);

'Earl's Court Exhibition Centre' (Policy CA7);

'Creative and Cultural Businesses' (Policy CF6); and

'Arts and Cultural Uses' (Policy CF7b).

Figure 8.2: Illustrative diagram showing the possible locations of cultural facilities

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A New Cultural Destination

Key Principle CS1:

Any redevelopment of the OA that involves the loss of EC1 and/or EC2 should create a new strategic leisure, cultural and visitor destination, providing a range of cultural, artistic and creative facilities.

8.7 The aim is to continue Earl's Court's reputation as a cultural destination. The new cultural destination must create an attractive place, with a distinctive cultural identity. Examples of cultural facilities that create successful destinations include: The Kunstmuseum (Stuttgart), Sadler's Wells (Islington), The Lowry Centre (Salford), The Public (West Bromwich), Millennium Square (Bristol) and the Saatchi Gallery in Duke of York's Square (King's Road).

8.8 In addition to the cultural uses, the design of buildings and spaces should contribute to this cultural identity. Buildings must be of exceptional architectural quality to mark the location of this important destination. Locating the cultural destination in the vicinity of the Empress State Building could also give meaning to the height and presence on the skyline of this existing landmark. This cultural destination should be further enhanced by supporting artistic and creative uses, public art and the use of external space for suitable exhibitions and events. However, the use of external space must not have a negative impact on the residential amenity of new and existing residents in the area.

8.9 This cultural destination will benefit residents and visitors, but it will also be important to existing businesses in the surrounding area who currently rely on the existing Earl's Court Exhibition Centres for a lot of their business (as set out in Key Principle ES6 of the Employment Strategy). The cultural destination will therefore need to be delivered in the earliest phases. Shops and services may serve and complement the cultural destination, while providing street level interest. The nature of this retail provision, together with measures to ensure it complements the cultural destination, will be controlled through the Retail Management Plan, as set out in Key Principle RS5.

8.10 A written strategy will be required for all planning applications involving the demolition of EC1 and/or EC2, demonstrating how that application proposes to develop the OA into a viable cultural and creative destination. This strategy will need to include details of the location, size, management and capacity of the proposed facilities, together with an assessment of their likely impact on residents and

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businesses in the wider area. This strategy will also need to include details on the disposition of supporting land uses, including affordable artists' studios, other creative workshop and studio space and details on how the retail strategy will support the cultural destination. Where proposed, planning conditions will be used to require more detailed cultural strategies that will, among other things, include details on the user / occupier of proposed cultural facilities. The Mayor of London and the boroughs must be engaged during the preparation of the cultural strategies.

Key Principle CS2:

Redevelopment of the OA will need to provide at least one large cultural facility to form an anchor, together with a number of other such facilities, to form a cultural destination.

8.11 An analysis of various cultural venues throughout Great Britain is shown in Table 8.1. With this in mind, the authorities will expect that, to be considered 'large', cultural facilities should have:

- a minimum footprint of 2,500sqm (GEA);
- a minimum floorspace of 10,000sqm (GIA);
- a hosting capacity of at least 2,000 visitors; and
- attract approximately 750,000 visitors per year.

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8.12 The extent to which one or several attractions anchor the cultural destination will not only depend on the size of the venue(s), but also the offer, location and how the attraction(s) are supported by smaller cultural venues, artists' studios, other creative workshop and studio space and bars / restaurants. Table 8.1 lists examples of smaller cultural facilities, showing that they can occupy relatively small spaces, which is likely to meet a demand for cultural space from local organisations. The extent to which the arts and cultural offer create a destination must therefore be considered in the cultural strategy, as required above.

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8.13 RBKC Core Strategy Policy CA7d indicates that a cultural facility must be located near to public transport accessibility. As Earl's Court Underground Station is the busiest station in the OA, at least one cultural facility must be located in the same general location. The type, size and offer must be such to sustain a culture facility in this location for the longer term. In this location it will help to create a sense of arrival to the OA from Earl's Court Underground Station. It will also ensure cultural facilities are provided early in the site's development, aiding those existing business that depend on the current footfall from the exhibition centres.

8.14 In addition to delivering a cultural destination, financial contributions will also be sought for enhancements to nearby heritage attractions, such as Brompton Cemetery.

Key Principle CS3:

Redevelopment of the OA will need to provide affordable artists' studios and other creative workshop and studio space.

8.15 In addition to the cultural facilities, redevelopment of the OA will need to provide affordable artists' studios and other creative workshop and studio space. The Mayor of London's Cultural Strategy (2012 and beyond) states that 'an important means by which arts and culture have contributed to urban regeneration is through workspace and artist studios'. This strategy makes specific reference to the large and constant demand for artists' studio space in London, quoting one specific provider, ACME, who have a waiting list of more than 3,500 artists. The strategy required under Key Principle CS1 will need to include information on the design, location, size, management and number of artists' studios and other creative workshop and studio space and its affordability.

Key Principle CS4:

Redevelopment should create opportunities to use art and culture to engage the new and existing communities at various stages and phases throughout the redevelopment.

8.16 Culture and art can play an important role in integrating the existing and new communities, whilst also keeping the existing community engaged through the development process. This can happen at various stages during the construction process, such as engagement events with the existing community (explaining aspects of the development process); using art or relevant information to improve the look of the hoardings during demolition and construction; and events where the new and existing community have an opportunity to interact. Applicants should also explore opportunities for vacant buildings to be used to accommodate pop up exhibitions and cultural events; although in some instances planning permission and event licences may be required. The authorities will expect that the strategy required under Key Principle CS1 sets out approaches to delivering this principle, where measures would be secured through planning condition or planning agreement.

Table 8.1: Cultural Venue case studies

Public Art

Key Principle CS5:

High quality public art will be required to enliven public spaces, create distinctive places and contribute to the identity of the cultural destination.

8.17 Public art can help to create a sense of place and identity by adding to the character of the townscape. This is particularly important when considering the type of place or identity being created in the cultural destination. However, public art must always be of the highest quality, and be carefully located so it does not restrict pedestrian movement or add to street clutter. The local community should be engaged in the design and location of new public art installations.

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8.18 Policy 7.5B of the Mayor's London Plan (2011) states that 'Opportunities for the integration of high quality public art should be considered'. Guidance on public art is also provided in the Mayor's Cultural Strategy (2012 and beyond). RBKC's Core Strategy (Policy CR4) 'requires all major development to provide new public art that is of high quality and either incorporated into the external design of new buildings or within the public realm'. Public Art in RBKC would also need to have regard to RBKC's Public Art Supplementary Planning Guidance, 2004.

8.19 The civic spaces required under Key Principle UF10, will need to demonstrate how public art is integrated into design of the public realm for the entire OA.

Figure 8.3: The Silver Bean in Chicago. Photograph by Tim Weston

Figure 8.4: 'Unfurl', by Ellis O'Connell at Kensington Gate

Hotels

Key Principle CS6:

Any application for the comprehensive redevelopment of the OA will be expected to include an element of hotel provision. At least 10% of the bedrooms in any hotel development should be wheelchair accessible.

8.20 There is a high concentration of hotels within the vicinity of the OA and the one hotel that is located within the OA (295 North End Road). The concentration of hotels is mainly due to the number of visitors attracted by Earl's Court's accessible location and the Exhibition Centres.

8.21 Annex 1 of the Mayor's London Plan (2011) requires development in the OA to explore the provision of, amongst other things, hotels. Policy 4.5A of the Mayor's London Plan (2011) 'seeks to achieve 40,000 net additional hotel bedrooms by 2031, of which at least 10% should be wheelchair accessible'. Policy 4.5B of the Mayor's London Plan requires development to contribute towards meeting the requirements in Policy 4.5A. RBKC's Core Strategy (2010) Policy CA7e and CF8b identifies the Earl's Court Exhibition Centre Strategic Site as being an appropriate location for new hotels. LBHF's Core Strategy (2011) 'Strategic Site and Housing Regeneration Area - FRA 1' identifies hotels as an appropriate use as part of any comprehensive regeneration of the OA.

8.22 There are different hotel markets to be served, including the leisure market, where a spa and pool would be required, the business market, which would need conference facilities and a business centre, and the budget market. Comprehensive redevelopment of the OA is of a sufficient scale to meet the demand from different hotel markets.