

LONDON
REVIEW PANEL



Cockpit Arts

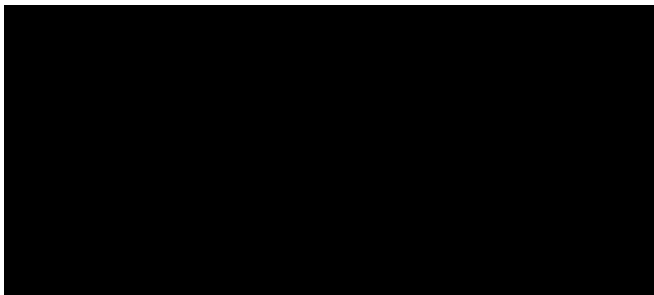
December 2021

Dear 

London Review Panel: Cockpit Arts Deptford, LB Lewisham

Please find enclosed the London Review Panel report following the design review of the Cockpit Arts Deptford on the 9th December 2021. I would like to thank you for your participation in the review and offer ongoing Mayor's Design Advocate support as the scheme's design develops.

Yours sincerely,



Mayor's Design Advocate

cc.

All meeting attendees

Jules Pipe, Deputy Mayor for Planning, Regeneration and Skills

Philip Graham, Executive Director of Good Growth, GLA

Louise Duggan, Head of Regeneration, GLA

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REVIEW PANEL

Report of London Review Panel meeting for Cockpit Arts Deptford, LB Lewisham

Thursday 9th December 2021

Review held remotely. A site visit took place on the 2nd December 2021, with a tour given by Cockpit Arts team [REDACTED]. Attendees include [REDACTED] (MDA), [REDACTED] (MDA) and [REDACTED] ddy (GLA).

London Review Panel

[REDACTED]

MDA (Chair)

MDA

MDA (attended borough, client and design team presentations and provided feedback to panel outside of the MDA discussion section)

Attendees

[REDACTED]

Cockpit Arts (Chief Executive)

Cockpit Arts (Project Manager)

Cockpit Arts (Head of Operations)

Cooke Fawcett Architects

Cooke Fawcett Architects

Cooke Fawcett Architects

Filigree Communications

GLA Regeneration (Project Officer)

GLA Regeneration (Panel Manager)

GLA Regeneration (South Team Area Manager)

[REDACTED]

LB Lewisham

LB Lewisham

Report copied to

Jules Pipe

Philip Graham

Louise Duggan

Deputy Mayor for Planning, Regeneration and Skills

GLA Executive Director of Good Growth

GLA Head of Regeneration

Confidentiality and publication

Please note that while schemes not yet in the public domain, for example at a pre-application stage, will be treated as confidential, as a public organisation the GLA is subject to the Freedom of Information Act (FOI) and in the case of an FOI request may be obliged to release project information submitted for review. Review reports will target publication to the London Review Panel webpage six months following the review unless otherwise agreed.

Project location

Cockpit Arts Deptford, 18-22 Creekside, London, SE8 3DZ, LB Lewisham

Presenting team



LB Lewisham
Cockpit Arts
Cooke Fawcett Architects
Cooke Fawcett Architects
Cooke Fawcett Architects
Filigree Communications

Local Authority Strategic Context & Background

LB Lewisham provided the strategic context and background for their involvement to date of this project. The borough is supporting Cockpit Arts as it delivers their priorities in responding to the pandemic, working towards an inclusive economy and contributing to creative industries in the area. The project aligns to the borough's corporate priorities around access to affordable maker space, fostering cultural production, providing jobs and supporting business start-ups. The borough is focused in investing in buildings to support these priorities to provide the infrastructure needed for creative industries to secure long-term growth. The borough sees this project being able to reach into the local community by providing spaces for education and skills opportunities. This project will contribute to the wider Creative Enterprise Zone and Thames Estuary Production Corridor.

Client Team Scene Setting

Cockpit Arts provided a summary of the background of the organisation, the origins of the project and the ambitions for its delivery. Cockpit Arts was set up to bridge the gap between those with a craft and maker skill but lacking workspace and support, through providing affordable studios. Cockpit Arts are involved in careers and school's outreach, equipment loans and seeks to see the progression of its users from apprentice to business owner. Cockpit Arts has been running for 35 years and been part of the community in Deptford for 20 years. In 2015 the nearby sites at Kent Wharf and Sun Wharf had plans drawn up for their redevelopment into residential uses. The developer had approached Cockpit Arts to include the site in their plans, with proposals for Cockpit Arts' reprovion within the new development. A community consultation concluded that Cockpit Arts should retain their existing building. Cockpit Arts recognised the need to optimise their existing building to continue to fulfil their ambitions and leading to this projects brief.

Cockpit Arts would like this project to open the building to the local community through an increased schools programme specifically targeting Deptford. Currently the existing education spaces are not suitable to achieve this, and the brief seeks to unlock unused spaces in the building and bring community facing uses to the ground floor. The project aims to create an improved public welcome onto Creekside and make more visible the craft activity inside. This will be supported by introducing a community café in the entrance courtyard and forum spaces at ground floor. The final aim of the project is to provide more and better-quality studio and workspace to expand Cockpit Arts' offer.

Design Team presentation

Cooke Fawcett Architects presented the design proposals developed to respond to Cockpit Art's brief. Cooke Fawcett were engaged on the project in 2019 and have undertaken two pre-application meetings with LB Lewisham in 2019 and 2020. The designs are intended to future proof the site in the context of Deptford's rapid development. Funding was secured in August 2021 which allowed the design team to develop the scheme for a phased planning submission in December 2021 and February 2022. The project context includes the Crossfields estate to the West, Kent and Sun Wharf to the North and East and the Laban Dance Centre further north. The team developed the proposals with makers at Cockpit Arts and have considered Cockpit Arts position as an anchor landowner in relation to the adjacent site's redevelopment.

The project team have proposed a new public welcome to increase Cockpit Arts street presence as currently there is poor visibility from Creekside and the public cannot see activity. The existing frontage onto Creekside was considered unwelcoming, with a 3.6m high mural wall running along much of its length. This mural, called Love Over Gold and painted by Gary Drostle in 1989, celebrates disability awareness with Outset and Action on Disability being the tenants in the building at the time. The wall is likely the remnant of a now demolished Victorian factory building, with windows blocked in and reskinned in render. The team identified opportunities in the currently unused and inaccessible front yard which, due to its orientation, could provide a well-lit and beneficial external space. The proposals for this new public welcome include retaining the boundary line with a new wall at the same height as the existing with large gates. The gates are intended to allow for a flexible range of enclosure depending on activity in the front yard. The front yard proposals aim to allow the public to see from the street activities within, though sensitive to the makers to protect their privacy.

A new education space is proposed to be relocated from the first to ground floor, facing onto the front yard and entrance café. This forms part of a wider rationalisation of existing spaces across the ground and first floors to optimise studio and workspace and bring public facing functions to ground level. There are currently two options for the new education space, one with an extension into the front yard and one where the yard is retained in its current size, the latter being the preferred option. Window improvements across the building are proposed. The team are keen to balance the needs for privacy of makers with the ambition to make more visible to the public the activity that happens inside. As such there is a clear security line proposed between public users and makers whilst views into and through the maker spaces and rear maker yards are established.

New studios are proposed to the rear yard, with additional covered external yard spaces for makers. These will be single storey along the eastern site boundary and 3.5m high internally. New external maker space (covered and uncovered) is proposed as well as areas retained parking and deliveries. The scheme has been developed with the areas industrial heritage informing the material palette. The material palette aims to give a coherent identity to Cockpit Arts, echoing the robustness and practicality of making in Cockpit Arts' ethos. The project team are targeting a hand over date of March 2023 as dictated by current funding agreements.

Consultation Activity

Filigree Communications provide the engagement strategy for the team and updated the panel on their activities since their programme started in November 2021. They are currently halfway through their planned programme of consultation building on previous community engagement activities undertaken a couple of years ago. Filigree's recent activities include hosting open forums for residents and writing to 100 local groups inviting them to respond to the proposals. Filigree have promoted this engagement on social media, websites and distributed 1500 letters to local households. Filigree have focused on engaging with communities in the adjacent Crossfields estate, with local schools and shops. Free entry for residents was advertised during open studio events and 26 residents used the facilities offered.

An online survey asking people to respond to the proposals and future of Cockpit Arts resulted in 11% of respondents being from the immediate catchment area, and 40% within 1-mile radius of the site, with 70 submissions in total. Overall respondents were supportive of increasing capacity, ground floor uses, new entrance and opening the front yard. The mural wall was discussed with local community who did recognise it as local interest but not its history. The team have consulted with the artist who suggested they did not object to its removal but that its themes should be reinterpreted in the proposals. In the next phase of the project the team are looking to think creatively about how the mural can be remembered. The murals importance is recognised, particularly in the context of Lewisham being the London Borough of Culture in 2022. There are two further planned participation family focused events in the new year.

London Review Panel's Views

Summary

The panel are very excited about this project and fully support the aims and ambitions of the team. This important project covers key Mayoral priorities including supporting creative industries, making in the city, and supporting disability and inclusion in the public realm. Cockpit Arts are in the advantageous position of owning the building and site and the panel encourage Cockpit Arts to use this status as a key anchor institution to direct and inform the future developments on this and surrounding sites. The panel agree that character and specificity in the design proposals that support Cockpit Arts activities are key. The panel encourage the team to look to other community and artist spaces for clues to success in delivering inclusion and diversity in placemaking. The panel will support the team as a critical friend and have provided feedback in the following sections that is intended to help the team in achieving the best possible outcome for the project.

Community and stakeholder consultation

- While the timing of the proposed public events is unfortunate, the team are encouraged to ensure time is made for a sincere and meaningful process of engagement, outreach, understanding and learning from the community and stakeholders is undertaken.
- This engagement process is key, and the team should show how the design is informed by this process, demonstrating what they have heard and how this feedback influences the designs.
- The panel would encourage the team to think about how space and architecture can support inclusion and welcome. Design cannot create a public welcome and achieve the project ambitions on its own; it must be determined with and through the participants in the process.
- The community and stakeholders must feel welcome, feel ownership and feel this is their space and this should be established at the briefing stage. This sense of ownership also makes the community and stakeholders more willing to overlook those things that don't work so well initially when it is handed over.
- The panel advise the team that inclusivity and reach to under-represented groups require a more sophisticated and less naïve understanding of the barriers to engagement and participation. A targeted, curated process of events, workshops, demonstrations can be both the way to scratch test ideas and to secure ongoing increased diversity. There also needs to be a curated programme of invited outreach that is ongoing beyond the delivery of this project
- The panel agree that physical models of the proposals are fantastic tools for these discussions to talk around.
- The panel advise the team that how you frame questions to the community and stakeholders can shape how they respond. Surveys can often freeze up more nuanced conversations about how to achieve outcomes. The panel suggest a focus group can target the specific questions such as what would make people be willing to cross the threshold from street to Cockpit Arts.
- The panel advise the team to use the engagement process to support the interplay of makers and wider community, allowing them to mix and discuss the proposals and the rules of these spaces together.

- The panel encourage the team to push ahead with engaging the community and stakeholders, suggesting workshops be run outside as soon as possible to open the conversations about how these spaces are being produced.
- The panel encourage the team to ensure their design team can join workshops so that participants can suggest small details that can be incorporated.
- The panel recommend the team look to the South London Gallery which has a great relationship and process of engagement with their surrounding community. They ask what they can do for their neighbours who have need of spaces and facilities. This has developed a genuine and mutually beneficial partnership.
- The panel also recommend Custom House Post Office where the engagement programmes are based on open interplay of ideas from the community stating what they want to see. It could be good to provide craft places to be messy for the community as these types of spaces were being lost. The panel recommend the team be clear in their messaging to the public that they can be messy at Cockpit Arts and that there are the spaces and facilities for them to do this.

Young People

- The panel advise the team to consider what would make young people attracted to come into Cockpit Arts. The panel agree that local teenagers are the ideal target audience for careers and training opportunities but are so often made to feel unwelcome in these types of spaces.
- The team should focus on ensuring teenagers are made to feel safe and secure, and the panel suggest the sheltered yard spaces are able to provide this security and privacy. This is in contrast with the open parks and fields in the surrounding areas young people are often left with.
- The panel encourage the team to show proposals for this space with teenagers from the local area being drawn in. The team should demonstrate they really understand what activities, facilities and designs would bring a young person from an underprivileged and underrepresented community into this space.

Existing Mural Wall

- The panel agree that there are significant themes in the mural on the empowerment of disabled people and that there are few if any contemporary examples of public art that talk to this. The panel question the demolition of this significant cultural heritage.
- The panel have not seen a compelling reason for the mural wall to be knocked down and the team are strongly encouraged to investigate an option where the mural wall is wholly or partially retained. This should show how the mural can be repaired and the scope for opening the bricked-up windows in a new palimpsest. The wall appears structurally sound though this should be verified and the existence of an in-situ concrete post and beam structure inside the wall could help stabilise if required.
- The panel believe the mural is an opportunity to further engage local people, in a process of repair and renewal (consistent with the message of the mural). This could bring a fresh contemporary layering to the artwork and a longer lasting cherishing of the work by the community. Being regarded as valuable and significant by the organisation is the first step in a long sequence which leads ultimately to greater

community pride, less vandalism and a stronger relationship between Cockpit Arts and the host community.

- The panel advise a more sensitive approach to the mural wall could obviate the need for planning permission for this side of the building. That could be of great benefit with the money saved in build costs and design and planning fees and the programme time won could all be used for better purposes.
- The panel agree it would be a shame to replace the existing with a more corporate front and encourage the team consider what Cockpit Arts wants to say to the world about its ethos and its makers. There is an opportunity here to celebrate making and creating in 2021 and the anarchic creativity of Deptford.
- The panel suggest public realm improvements could include the widening of the pavement, obviating this justification for removing the wall.

Front Yard

- The panel agree the new public welcome in the front yard can be used to manage the courtyards roles as the place of interplay between education users, public and makers. The panel felt the current depictions of the new front yard spaces do not feel like they reflect those living in the area, with the yard dominated by café furniture.
- The panel believe the front yard should be shown as space for makers working outside.
- The panel encourage the team to have conversations with the community and stakeholders about the rules of this front yard space, who can use it when and what activities it should host.
- The panel advise the team that it doesn't matter if the existing door is small, if it feels welcoming then the target users will find their way in to access the facilities.
- The panel agree the 'Secret Garden' idea is more powerful, inviting and programmable than an open, gated forecourt. It provides a sheltered private external space to explore making not available elsewhere nearby. It is important to provide an element of protection to those making things outside, so they are not in the full glare of the public eye. Young people can often feel embarrassed being overlooked by their peers when exploring new skills and activities.
- The panel note there are some already existing makers at Cockpit Arts who are keen gardeners and could be encouraged to get involved in the front yard planting. This invitation to existing makers could be extended to developing furniture.
- The panel agree the café offer should be welcoming to those on medium and low incomes by offering affordable options.
- The panel recommend the team look at spaces created by local communities and artists that are successful and avoid being seen as a high-end gallery that is inaccessible. The panel recommend the team avoid an institutional approach to the new entry sequence otherwise they might miss the specific and special character of this organisation and users.
- The panel note there is a good amount of public open space nearby of high standard and offering different characteristics, and therefore little benefit in producing a similar open space to the street in the front yard.

Relationship to railway viaduct arches, scaffold yard and future developments

- The scaffold yard becoming a new public route to the Creek will require comprehensive local improvement of the public realm and this should be anticipated and shaped by Cockpit Arts. The proposals should consider how the opening of the scaffolding yard, activation of the arches and pedestrian permeability of these new routes will affect and be affected by this project. The panel recommend the team articulate this future relationship clearly in a longer-term vision with internal layout strategies to respond to this.
- The panel agree that when the scaffold yard is developed this will provide a significant new open front for Cockpit Arts to respond to in achieving its aims of public welcome and interaction to the street.
- The panel agree that Option B is preferred, with the space shown for education purposes at ground floor adequate and not impinging on the front yard space.
- The panel recommend the team consider the effect of the neighbouring site developments will have on sunlight into the rear and front yards and internal spaces existing and proposed.

Balancing privacy for makers and visibility of activity for the public

- The panel believe the internal re-planning is dominated by the practical need for security of the maker studios, at the expense of the larger aims of the project, namely an invite and pathway to engagement of under-represented groups and young people. The potential use of workshop spaces as thresholds can achieve this and is only currently used in a limited way.
- The current proposals show a strong dividing line between the public and the makers with separate entrances. The panel encourage to the team to consider more creative ways to maintain privacy and security but still allow casual visitors to glimpse into Cockpit Arts activities.
- The panel recommend that the internal replanning can be scratch tested with users and the community invited in to see how things work. The team can then tweak the changes as they go rather than focus their efforts, time and money to produce a grand gesture.

Education space options

- The panel suggest the internal layout and furniture of the education spaces should go beyond providing an empty classroom space but demonstrate how the different age groups interact with craft tools and materials. The team are encouraged to detail how the proposed education space and any messy outdoor workspace would work and be an exemplar of this type of facility for young people.
- The panel agree that the client's decision not to progress the option of building into the front yard allows for a future connection to the scaffold yard frontage.

Optimisation of site for new workshops and future phases of Cockpit Arts

- The panel suggest Cockpit Arts establish what the other strategic or longer-term options are for expansion of studio and workshop spaces across the site. As owner of this site, what is Cockpit Arts long-term view as the site clearly has scope to develop more intensively.

- The panel advise that this project should be considered Phase 1 of this site optimisation. There should also be proposals undertaken to demonstrate what any future and final phases would look like and ensure earlier phases including this one do not impede future phases. The workshop proposals appear to prevent the future expansion upwards at this part of the site which would be a missed development opportunity given the high party wall.
- The panel encourage the team to consider the potential for the new rear yard studios to extend over multiple floors in the future, with suitable foundations and frame strengths designed in at this stage to allow for expansion as and when funds are available.
- The panel queried whether the new workshop building dimensions and openings were based on the needs of the users and advised the team to check that they will be big enough for material handling and machinery dimensions.
- The panel suggest the team look at Blackhorse Road workshops as a good example of maker space and working yards.

Maximising the benefits of the rear yard

- The panel agree that the rear yard proposal seem to be governed by delivery van movements and that there is a need to interrogate the cost and benefit of bringing delivery trucks so deep in the yard. The panel note the option of using a palette trolley to move deliveries around the yard could free up this space.
- The team are encouraged to undertake vehicle tracking on the rear yard to understand the areas needed for the parking and delivery requirements.
- The panel agree the delivery requirements should be interrogated so that they impact as little as possible on the more valued uses of the yard, namely external maker spaces, amenity spaces and footprint for the new studio building.

Utilising the existing talent of Cockpit Arts Makers

- Cockpit Arts has a fantastic existing resource on hand in the form of its makers. Instead of getting in external consultants for small interventions and improvements Cockpit Arts can start in small ways engaging tenants and residents. This can be for work such as gardening, and by paying them would encourage others. As this grows this could lead to further investment such as in a greenhouse, buying tools or commissioning a big external work bench or worktable.
- There are various Cockpit artists interested in repair as a creative practise and it would be great to include your makers in the care and repair of the building and its fabric including the public art.

Next Steps

The panel would welcome the opportunity to further comment on this exciting and aspirational scheme at a future appropriate stage in the project development.