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Dear Mr Hawkins,

Earls Court site- comments from the Fulham Society

I am sending this letter to both you and Studio Egret West as you have been appointed the principal masterplan architects for the Earls Court development. The Fulham Society submitted a similar letter to Delancey last March in response to their consultation but consider it important that you should be aware of the views of the Society to this major development.

The Fulham Society, formed in 1971, is the largest local amenity society in Fulham with over 600 individual members. We are a non-political group whose aim is to maintain Fulham as an agreeable place in which to live and work, and to achieve this we monitor planning applications and keep a watch over the parks, traffic, the police and other local matters.

Following are the points we made to Delancey:

Housing. The Fulham Society would like to see a mixed range of housing and are pleased you are will be aiming at 35% affordable housing. We hope that some of this will be social rented. Please consider key worker housing too and possibly some hostel accommodation for local students such as those at LAMDA.

Ideally, we would prefer mansion blocks and low rise high density along street lines rather than individual, isolated high-rise blocks. If you decide to include some higher blocks, please remember that it is not just their height that affects their neighbours, but also the effects of shade and wind. The general scale height and massing of any development along the edges of the regeneration area should have a relationship to the existing townscape.

Community. New developments need atmosphere. The danger is that purely residential sites of predominantly small, non-family flats become deserts with few families around during the day and the majority commuting to work. Accommodation needs to be family sized. Areas need schools, nurseries, medical centres, transport hubs and community centres – and these are needed early in the development.

Mixed economy. We would like to see a mixed use of the site. We do not want a dormitory development but would like to see suitable employment opportunities. So often the employment opportunities offered by these large developments seem to be in the hospitality and retail industries and in the previous application, there was much talk of smart shopping malls and of coffee shops,

not a good idea this past year. It is hoped that you will emphasise higher grade employment opportunities and inward investment to support new enterprises and start-up businesses.

Training and employment funding and initiatives, including through pre-employment support activity and local recruitment campaigns will be important. New employment would be expected to stimulate considerable investment in the surrounding area. All this will, in turn, increase local employment opportunities. Too many of the recent local developments - including Imperial Wharf, Chelsea Creek, Lots Road, Fulham Wharf and Fulham Reach - have been overwhelmingly residential with limited new employment opportunities.

Local shops and studios. We strongly support the retention of local shops, particularly those near West Brompton station that serve the residential area to the west of it. We would also hope that the regeneration of this area will benefit the northern section of the North End Road. We are very aware of how many small workshops, artist studios and local industries have been lost recently and it would be popular if some of these could be encouraged back into the borough.

A destination interest. The Fulham Society wants this area to be part of the general community and not an enclosed area and we would suggest some destination project that will attract visitors from all London. Our Committee have suggested an Olympic size skating rink or a local museum.

Green and public open space. In a densely built up area like Hammersmith and Fulham, the local environment and public spaces are very important. This area in particular has less open space than some of the more fortunate parts of the borough and the provision of more public open space as part of this large development will be vital. Developers always make much play of the amount of green planting between blocks of flats and along the pathways but such areas tend to be viewed as private not public space. The area needs space suitable for games and outdoor playing space.

There are virtually no trees on the site and we would like to see a plan for extensive tree planting.

Transport. The intensity of development should be related to public transport accessibility and highway capacity. The area has three stations that will become increasingly busy. It has a reasonable bus service around its periphery although provision may need to be made for one of the local buses to serve those less mobile residents in the centre of the development. Transport for London is a partner in this development so hopefully consideration will be given to this topic.

The roads in the area are very crowded with severe bottlenecks as they cross the West London railway. Traffic generated by this development should not add to parking pressures on local streets or congestion, or worsen air quality. Ideally, we would like all car parking being restricted to electric vehicles with charging points installed from day one. We expect you will be developing and promoting safe environments for cyclist and pedestrians.

Conservation. Fulham has an important industrial heritage and we would like it to be remembered and featured in as many ways as possible. Please ensure the history of Earls Court Exhibition Hall, for example, is featured in the development and any historical documents and archives affecting the borough are preserved.

Yours sincerely,

Fiona Fowler
Chairman, The Fulham Society