



# Alexandra Palace Strategic Masterplan Consultation

Diversity Focus Group  
Discussions

## Summary Report

July 2012

47062686

UNITED  
KINGDOM &  
IRELAND



Alexandra Palace the regeneration. TOMORROW'S ALLY PALLY

Share your thoughts on or @yourallypally (#haveyoursay)

## HAVE YOUR SAY

SOMETHING BIG IS HAPPENING SO GET INVOLVED AND GIVE US YOUR VIEWS TO SHAPE YOUR ALLY PALLY

THE REGENERATION PROGRAMME COVERS SIX BIG IDEAS. WHAT ARE YOUR TOP PRIORITIES?

KEY TO THE SIX BIG IDEAS

- #1 IMPROVING YOUR FIRST IMPRESSIONS
- #2 UPGRADING THE ENTRANCES TO THE PALACE
- #3 MAKING IT EASIER TO MOVE AROUND INSIDE THE PALACE
- #4 UPGRADING THE MAIN HALLS
- #5 A HOTEL IN THE PALACE
- #6 OPENING UP THE DERELICT SPACES

VISIT THE WEBSITE TO SEE THE FULL PLAN AND GIVE US YOUR FEEDBACK

[CLICK HERE TO HAVE YOUR SAY](#) Share your thoughts on or @yourallypally (#haveyoursay)

Alexandra Palace the regeneration. TOMORROW'S ALLY PALLY

DISCOVER YOUR Ally Pally

For online plan email: [tomorrowallypally@alexandrapalace.com](mailto:tomorrowallypally@alexandrapalace.com)  
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## ALLY PALLY PLANS

INVITATION TO HAVE YOUR SAY

There are big plans for the regeneration of Ally Pally. We want the plans to be informed by everyone. So what do you think? Will you want to visit Ally Pally in the future?

We want to find out how you use the building and park, what matters most to you, what's good, what's missing and your reaction to the masterplan

Give us your opinion and we'll give you vouchers for either free entry for two to the Alexandra Palace Ice Rink or 50% off a meal for two at the Bar & Kitchen!

**On Wednesday, 27 June 2012**  
**10.30am - 12 midday (older and disabled people); or**  
**4.30pm - 6pm (young people 15 - 24 years)**

Both events held in the Transmission Hall, BBC Tower, Ally Pally.

**Interested to take part?**  
Call: 020 7821 4200 to secure your place!  
Email: [marina.johnson@urs.com](mailto:marina.johnson@urs.com)  
Text: 07971 655516

Make sure to mention 'Ally Pally' and leave your name and a contact phone number. We will get back to you with further details.

Prepared for:  
Alexandra Palace Charitable Trust



REVISION SCHEDULE					
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[Forecast cost estimates do not include such costs associated with any negotiations, appeals or other non-technical actions associated with the agreement on measures to meet the requirements of the authorities, nor are potential business loss and interruption costs considered that may be incurred as part of any technical measures.]

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## 1 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### 1.1 Introduction

The Alexandra Palace charitable trust commissioned URS to provide advice and specialist input to the consultation on the Alexandra Palace spatial masterplan. The purpose of this input was to enhance the inclusivity of the consultation, in particular to reach groups of people whose views might potentially go unheard in the exhibition-based consultation. As part of this input, URS arranged and facilitated a set of focused discussion groups aimed at specific target audiences.

Presented below are the headline findings of issues raised by participants during the focused discussions conducted on Wednesday 27th June 2012. The profile of the participants of each focus group was as follows:

- Morning session at Alexandra Palace: Targeted at older people and disabled people, the attendees comprised seven people, which included young learning disabled people, an adult wheelchair user, personal assistant and older local residents.
- Afternoon session at Alexandra Palace: Targeted at young people from across Haringey, the actual attendees comprised seven people, which included young Black men, an older man of South Asian origin, as well as women residents local to the Park of different ethnic backgrounds.
- Evening session at Bernie Grant Centre: Targeted at people from diverse ethnic backgrounds from East Haringey, the actual attendees comprised six women, most of whom were of Black/Black Caribbean heritage. One young white woman who attended both shared her own views and the views of young deaf people attending the Neville Blanche school.
- The more mixed composition of these sessions, relative to the target groups, reflected individual's choices to switch sessions to fit with their other commitments, substitutions (one person attended in place of their son, who was no longer able to come) and interest from individuals who were keen to attend despite not fitting with the target group, in terms of their identity characteristics.

The participants showed themselves to be capable of both strategic and practical thinking and consisted of participants who visited regularly (including daily) and occasionally. The use of the focus group participants for the further testing of more detailed plans is recommended, together with, as one particular participant suggested a dedicated session with a pan-London disability access forum co-ordinated by GLA.

## 2 HEADLINE FINDINGS - IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR SPATIAL MASTERPLAN NEXT STEPS

### 2.1 Idea 1: Improving your first impressions

- The emphasis on 'first impressions' needs to be in balance with the emphasis on 'what is the offer?' for visitors. To attract organised visits by young people, the range of attractions needs to be increased to make it worth the visit, particularly to overcome perceived barriers that it is inaccessible to reach.
- Measures to address both perceptions that Alexandra Palace is inaccessible to reach and practical experience of travel problems, particularly from East Haringey, are likely to be very important to encourage more visitors from Tottenham and other parts of East Haringey. This is likely to require a mix of improving availability/outreach of information about available transport options as

well as improved travel and parking arrangements for events, including improved shuttle bus services after events.

- The regeneration of Ally Pally needs to improve the 'draw' for East Haringey residents so that concerns about travel requirements to reach the Palace are outweighed by the desire to visit.
- Improved wheelchair access at Alexandra Palace is an important priority. In improving the entrances, this should prioritise ensuring the main entrances enable wheelchair users to use them, alongside other visitors.
- An emphasis on wheelchair access needs to extend back to approaches to the Palace, including investment in improved surfacing of pavement around the building and at other venues in the Park, making more paths wheelchair accessible with consistent drop curves on paths. This should be supported by information for wheelchair users identifying which paths and parts of the building are step-free and wheelchair accessible.
- The disabled/elderly group had some concerns about the lower terrace treatment, reflecting a natural caution with the mixing of pedestrian, café, shops and vehicular transport routes. Unlike in Exhibition Road, it was felt there wouldn't be the density of people on shared surfaces most of the time to encourage due caution to vehicles. Wheelchair users felt a traditional street curb was needed for visually impaired. Perhaps surprisingly, the opening up of the central point of the building and terraces was not seen as a particularly advantage for some due to the need for a ramp or escalator to solve the height difference. They were more concerned about the arrival points at either end of building and circulation within it. In the other groups there was clear support for the principle of making the road less threatening to cross.
- The presence of cafes and a more lively frontage had a lot of appeal for making people feel welcome. However, not everyone was convinced of the appeal of having this at the same level as the cars. The design would need to ensure that the cafes would be sufficiently set back from the road, or possibly be located up at the terrace level.
- The animation and commercialisation of the lower terrace needs very careful thought from a diversity point of view. It is very much the connecting point between the palace and its park, drawing people from one environment to another. A lift, ramp or escalator which provided the users with a view to the park on the one hand and a direct route to not only the upper terrace, but the building itself would be particularly important and enable those who are less mobile or wheelchair bound to move much more easily and quickly between the two vital elements of this exciting regeneration
- In considering catering provision, this needs to include non-licensed provision, to cater to groups who do not wish to buy refreshments or meals where alcohol is served. This may be particularly relevant to people practising different faiths, whose practice of their faith include lifestyle choices based on beliefs and values concerning consumption of alcohol. It can also be relevant for family groups or groups of children, where the choice of an alcohol-free environment may be preferred.
- Generally, an improved choice and quality of catering is significant for increasing the appeal to a diverse range of people, in terms of catering to different tastes, different preferred styles of eating out and different budgets.

- 'Greening' the Palace would improve the appeal of the Palace, helping to connect it more with the Park, which is currently the main draw for people from diverse cultural backgrounds, including those from East Haringey.

## 2.2 Idea 2: Upgrading the entrances to the Palace

- Disabled people and BME residents from East Haringey both strongly supported the need for the entrances to be improved, to avoid being sent all the way round the Palace.
- All diversity groups identified the entrances as not inviting. Improvements to the entrance ways would potentially encourage more people who come to the Park to also visit the Palace.
- More equal, inclusive access for disabled people, including wheelchair users, through ramps, signage and appropriate surfacing. Steps in place of a 'longwinded' path at Palm Court entrance would potentially benefit mobility impaired visitors who are limited in the distances they can walk before needing a rest. Improved signage to indicate provision of facilities, as well as including information on the accessibility of different parts of the Palace and Park are important for disabled people.
- In rethinking the entrances, an important aspect is to make it easy for people to interpret the 'status' of each entrance e.g. is this the Main entrance? Is this the entrance for a particular purpose? Is this not an entrance not for public use? This is likely to be particularly important for people with learning or sensory impairments to avoid confusion. It is likely to be important for people with mobility impairments, to avoid walking unnecessarily long distances and getting tired out.

## 2.3 Idea 3: Making it easier to move around inside the Palace

- This idea of making it easier to move around inside the Palace is strongly supportive of inclusive access for disabled people
- The improved access needs to be given purpose by having more going on in the Palace, to create more purpose for people to move from one area to another.
- For children particularly, but potentially also for other visitors, the long wide corridors need to be made more attractive in themselves, not only for functional purpose of moving people from one space to another. Displays in corridors may offer a way to enhance local people's feelings of familiarity, belonging and pride when they visit the Palace.
- Opening up and improving the ability to move around inside the palace is likely to benefit the experience of young people, as well as others, overcoming inhibitions about going 'offlimits' or 'out of bounds'. For school groups, and for children with sensory impairments, staffing levels are likely to be an additional important factor to improve their experience, in support of physical changes.
- Within the building, there needs to be improved provision of accessible toilets, for visitors to the different parts of the building.

## 2.4 Idea 4: Upgrading the Main Halls

- There was strong support amongst people from BME backgrounds for a wider range of activities being held in the halls. For young people, active usages might be particularly motivating, such as a climbing wall, surf simulator. Roller Derby was particularly mentioned as very popular amongst women, with an indication that there is likely to be strong demand for a venue in North London.

- Prioritising renovation of the main halls was valued as potentially enabling further investment, to increase investment and hence enable more activities to be offered that would strengthen the appeal for a wider audience, including people from East Haringey.
- For children/young people, the idea of the main hall as a venue for a school prom prompted enthusiasm. This could potentially be important for future involvement of people from BME backgrounds, as the school-age population of Haringey is extremely ethnically diverse, so it would offer a memorable way for young people to experience and establish positive associations with Alexandra Palace.
- Other mass appeal events, such as talent competitions, were also identified by BME participants as ways to attract more visitors to the Palace. The choice of type of events is likely to influence which sections of the Haringey population is attracted to visit. Potential options would need to inform the design requirements in order to cater to different types of events.
- Culturally-specific events may be helpful in introducing people from different cultural backgrounds to Alexandra Palace, or as an annual draw. However, these should be part of an overall varied programme, as people from different backgrounds are interested in events that relate to other cultures as well as their own. More 'universal' events, such as the fireworks are also valued by people of different ages, abilities and cultural backgrounds.
- Women particularly identified increased numbers of toilets and more intensive cleaning regime for them during major events. It is likely that increased numbers of toilets for men are also needed, though it is probably more significant as a factor for women than for men.
- Improvements to the Palace layout should seek to improve the experience of people queuing to enter major music events and other exhibitions. The lack of security and sheltered space is likely to deter people. The current need to queue for a long time outside in addition to the relative difficulty of travelling to Ally Pally is likely to deter visitors from East Haringey.

## 2.5 **Idea 5: A Hotel in the Palace**

- BME residents recognised the potential of a hotel and were overall very enthusiastic about this option, recognising the benefits of making other developments financially viable, as well as providing luxury facilities that local residents would also be able to visit.
- If a hotel proceeds, it will be important that the design and management takes into consideration the dynamics and relationships between hotel residents and other visitors, towards achieving an inclusive feel, rather than an exclusive 'them and us' feeling. Allowing public access to certain parts of the hotel, and design that makes it clear this is encouraged, would support this.

## 2.6 **Idea 6: Opening up the derelict spaces**

- The derelict spaces potentially provide an opportunity for community space use. This could have appeal for a range of voluntary groups whose members or users share protected characteristics, including disability groups, youth groups and BME groups. Inclusive access, via lifts and other measures to achieve disabled access standards would be important to realise this benefit for groups that include disabled members/users.



- The renovation of the BBC tower and studios generated considerable enthusiasm, including due to the international and more inclusive status of the BBC. The focus groups indicated strong emphasis particularly for engaging more with young people, including through the potential for fostering links with existing East Haringey based initiative to train young people in radio broadcasting skills.
- The positive responses to the potential renovation of the theatre also indicate that this could provide opportunities to engage with existing arts, theatre and school groups. This would need to consider how to make usage affordable for local groups. The theatre renovation was also recognised as creating learning opportunities for children and young people. Upgrading and reopening the theatre was thought to be one of the strongest ideas
- Focus group participants, particular those from BME backgrounds, demonstrated a hard-nosed streak and strong scepticism about the need for commercial viability, to avoid promises about new facilities that never come to realisation. This informed cautions that commercial revenue streams should be realised first, in order to help fund new community-oriented initiatives.

### 3 THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE PALACE AND THE PARK

One of the unexpected findings of the focus groups was that regardless of location, age, sex or disability, participants enjoyment of and access to the park was as vital as the building itself. “The park is the gold”, commented one participant. Many of the participants memories related to the Park rather than the Palace. The diversity group saw the park and the building as one, intimately linked and one reinforcing the other. A regenerated building in a low-key park was a worry because for some, because Ally Pally’s current uniqueness wasn’t the organ, Grand Hall or BBC studios, but the view, the nature and the calmness of the site. Some wanted to see the park and all its facilities as a much clearer destination, for example for school groups exploring nature.

Against this, one very local participant who backed onto the park actually liked the fact that it was a little ‘secret’, without too many signs. “I don’t want it to be too glamorous and too commercial”. Although a minority view it is quite possible that the immediate neighbours around the park will need reassurance that the park’s essential quietness (particularly around the edges) will not change radically. A number of implications flow from this:

- By making efforts to strengthen the relationship between the Park and the Palace, particularly capitalising on the views from the Palace, are likely to encourage increased use of the Palace by local visitors from different cultural backgrounds. The regeneration plans also need to extend to improvements to the Park, such as improved path surfaces, in order to facilitate that connectivity.
- In considering options for activities that connect Palace and Park, there needs to be consideration of how they will appeal to different groups. For example, more active uses, such as BMX/mountain biking, would particularly appeal to young people. By contrast, an emphasis on maintaining the peace and tranquillity may appeal more to older people, to people who visit the park prompted by their religious or spiritual beliefs and for those seeking a romantic destination. The design needs to factor in how these different priorities can be balanced, to enable inclusive and equal access for all.
- Enhancing and making available the heritage and cultural riches of the Palace has appeal for a wide range of people, including people from BME backgrounds, for young people, for older people and for both men and women. This also applies to capitalising more effectively on the educational and conservation dimensions of the Park, which was widely felt to be under-used.

- One opportunity to engage with different faith groups, including churches whose congregations are from African or Caribbean backgrounds, may be through capitalising on the Park as a place for quiet contemplation and prayer use. This may be an opportunity that merits more focused engagement with relevant groups.