

Boris Johnson
Mayor of London
Mayoral Development Corporation Consultation
City Hall
More London
The Queen's Walk
London SE1 2AA

27 April 2011

Dear Mayor Johnson

Mayoral Development Corporation Consultation

I am writing on behalf of Art in the Open, an Open-City initiative, and London's independent advisor for art in the public realm. For the past four years Art in the Open's work has focused particularly on East London, the Olympic Park and surrounding area. In particular we have acted as advisors to the Olympic Delivery Authority's Arts and Cultural Strategy, the 5 Host Boroughs Unit, London Thames Gateway Development Corporation and to Design for London and their local authority partners.

Alongside the consultation document our comments reference London Plan Policy 7.5 and Cultural Metropolis – The Mayor's Cultural Strategy, policy 4.5. Given our area of expertise, knowledge of the area and its current delivery bodies, we have the following comments to make on the Mayoral development corporation consultation. In relation to the questions laid out in the consultation and relevant to our expertise and knowledge:

Question 1:

- We broadly welcome the designation of a Mayoral development area, and creation of a Mayoral development corporation as the most effective way to meet the stated Mayor's objectives. Given the developing cultural identity of the Olympic Park and surrounding areas as part of the regeneration process, the objectives of a new Mayoral development corporation should include ensuring investment in cultural infrastructure alongside social, physical and environmental infrastructure.

Question 2:

- The current cultural investment in the Olympic Park and surrounding area demonstrates that this can support the convergence agenda. The Olympic Park Legacy Corporation's proposed purpose should include cultural regeneration alongside physical, social, economic and environmental regeneration.

Question 3:

- From our knowledge of the area, the proposed boundary generally offers the best opportunity to meet the Mayor's objectives. However, for consistency and coherence of approach, Stratford Town Centre including the Cultural Quarter would benefit from incorporation into the Olympic Park Legacy Corporation. The development of the town centre has already suffered from its dislocation from the Olympic Park, Stratford City and Olympic Village sites as well as the effects of different approaches to its public realm and transport connections. Its social, economic and cultural offer would be greatly strengthened if treated as part of the Olympic Park Legacy Corporation in strong collaboration with the local authority.

Question 4:

Designating full planning powers to the Olympic Park Legacy Corporation would be beneficial to promote and deliver physical, social, economic, environmental and cultural development in the Olympic Park and surrounding area.

Question 5:

No comment.

Question 6:

No comment.

Question 7:

The cultural programmes and legacies of the London Thames Gateway Development Corporation, the Olympic Delivery Authority, Olympic Park Legacy Company and Olympic Village should transfer into the Olympic Park Legacy Corporation. Cultural assets including public art, often define an area, its character and appearance. Often they are neglected and un-maintained, though often in the ownership of local authorities, as there is no programme or funding for regular maintenance or a decision-making forum to decommission if necessary. The Olympic Park Legacy Corporation by stewardship of these assets would provide a coherent and necessary support structure to these assets.

Financing the Corporation

Finally, in terms of financing the new Corporation, funds from the Mayor and Government must be identified to cover its core costs in the longer-term, given that the existing funding settlement for OPLC covers the current Government spending review period and covers only the Olympic Park area. Ensuring core funding in the long-term from the Mayor and Government must be considered to sustain growth and not add to any island effect given the existing deprivation gap.

Funding needs to cover the stewardship and development of transferred assets. Maintaining and developing cultural infrastructure for the area should be viewed as a core cost, with additional funds to be raised, rather than an add-on. This would be inline with current policy and development by existing bodies in the area outlined, including the ODA Arts and Cultural Strategy, Hackney Wick Fish Island and the Stratford section of High Street 2012. Allowance should be made to use the Community Infrastructure Levy and section 106 agreements to cover cultural infrastructure to support an integrated approach and help lever additional funding and provide sustainably for these assets and their development.

We look forward to the results of this consultation exercise for the development of the new Olympic Park Legacy Corporation.

Yours sincerely

Victoria Thornton
Director, Open-City