

1 DETAILS OF THE DEVELOPMENT

Ref: 19/05282/PRE
Location: The Fair Field (College Green), Park Lane, Croydon
Ward: Fairfield
Description: Public Realm scheme to transform the Fair Field (also known as College Green and Fairfield Gardens) into a world class public space
Drawing Nos: Pre-application pack
Applicant: Croydon Council (Growth Zone Team)
Case Officer: Katy Marks

2 PROCEDURAL NOTE

- 2.1 This proposed development is being reported to Planning Committee to enable Members to view it at pre application stage and to comment upon it. The development does not constitute an application for planning permission and any comments made upon it are provisional, and subject to full consideration of any subsequent application, including any comments received as a result of consultation, publicity and notification.
- 2.2 It should be noted that this report represents a snapshot in time, with negotiations and dialogue on-going. The plans and information provided to date are indicative only and as such the depth of analysis provided corresponds with the scope of information that has been made available to Council officers. Other issues may arise as more detail is provided and the depth of analysis expanded upon.
- 2.3 The report covers the following points:
- Executive summary of key issues with scheme
 - Site briefing
 - Place Review Panel feedback
 - Summary of matters for consideration
 - Specific feedback requests

3 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 3.1 The scheme seeks to transform the Fair Field into a world class public space. The proposed scheme is ambitious in scope and design. The original scheme was selected as part of an OJEU process which set some of the parameters of the design intent. The pre-application process and this report focus upon the detailed design of the proposals.
- 3.2 The scheme has evolved through a series of pre-application meetings and has been reviewed by planning officers and presented to the Place Review Panel (PRP). Officers and PRP are broadly supportive of the proposals particularly the

bold aesthetic and playfulness of the designs. Discussions have focused on the detailed hard and soft landscaping designs, the structural 'wayfinding' and kiosk elements.

4 SITE BRIEFING

Site and Surroundings

- 4.1 The site comprises the Fair Field public realm and wider pedestrian links. The red line currently extends to include the Park Lane frontage to the junction with College Road to the north and to include the Fairfield Halls frontage to the south. To the east and north east, the design brief extends to include a route to George Street to provide step free access to East Croydon Station, through the adjacent development sites (Fairfield Homes, College Tower, Mondial House and 101 George Street).

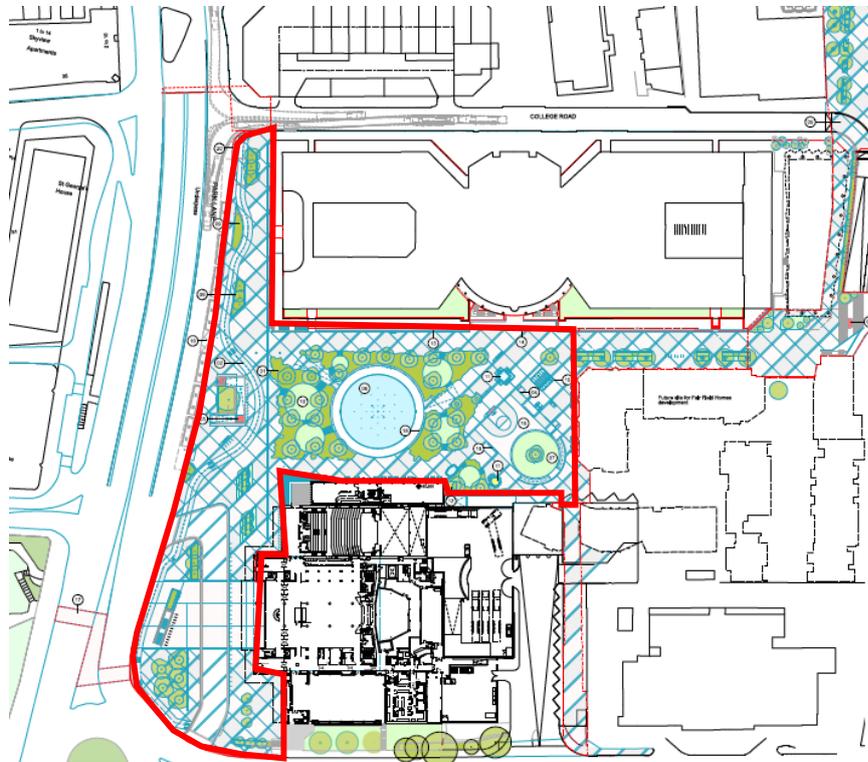


Image 1: current red line of the site in bold

- 4.2 The public realm is situated upon a podium level above a basement car park which extends the whole length of the public realm. The land level for the public realm is complex (given that it is at podium level), with the development and ground levels surrounding the site being slightly varied. Space has been set aside in the basement plans for plant and M&E required for the proposed water feature and some alterations will be required to accommodate proposed changes to the subway accesses and to allow for a 'forest' tree. There are two existing subway entrances which provide access to the basement; one within the Fairfield Halls frontage providing steps and a second to the centre of the Park Lane pavement which provides a ramp. The car park is currently closed but is expected

to be operational in the near future (the vehicle access is via the Barclay Road ramp (to the rear of Fairfield Homes) and College Road ramp (between the College Tower and Mondial House sites)).

4.3 The site has a number of designations in the Croydon Local Plan 2018 including:

- Undesignated Local Space protected under policy 7.18 of the London Plan
- Located within the Croydon Opportunity Area
- Located within the Croydon Metropolitan Centre
- Located within the Fair Field Masterplan area



Image 2: site (as currently hoarded off) viewed from Croydon College



Image 3: site prior to partial demolition and hoarding

Background: Fair Field Masterplan and Hybrid Planning Permission

Fair Field Masterplan

4.4 The Fair Field Masterplan covers the area bounded by George Street, Park Lane, Barclay Road and the railway line and provides a framework for redevelopment as Croydon's cultural and learning quarter; focussing on a lively and sustainable mix of residential, cultural, educational and commercial uses as well as a well-connected and high quality public realm.

4.5 Key aims of the Masterplan which are relevant to this scheme include:

- Creating a regional destination anchored by significant institutions that contribute to and benefit from their surroundings
- Creating an animated, and well-used public realm that complements surrounding spaces
- Providing a vital mix of activities giving opportunities for local enterprise
- Increased accessibility, legibility and activity to support enhanced potential for development sites
- Better pedestrian connections within the Masterplan area and to the surrounding area



Image 3: illustrative render of the Fair Field Masterplan

Hybrid Planning Permission

- 4.6 Planning permission was granted in April 2017 for an ambitious redevelopment of the whole Fair Field's Masterplan area through determination of a comprehensive hybrid planning application (LBC Ref 16/00944/P). As part of this, a detailed public realm scheme was proposed for the Fair Field, including three greens (one incorporating playspace), new paving, a small water fountain and structural lighting features.



Images 4 and 5: extant public realm scheme

- 4.7 Since this date the Council's ambitions for the space have become more aspirational (funded through the Growth Zone) and the current scheme won an OJEU tender process in response to a brief issued by Croydon Council.

Planning History

- 4.8 The following planning decisions are relevant to the application.

The Site:

- 4.9 Permission was granted for a hybrid application which relates to the whole masterplan area (LBC Ref 16/00944/P): Outline planning permission for demolition and redevelopment to provide: flexible class A1 (shops) and/or class A2 (financial and professional services) and/or class A3 (food and drink); class B1 (business); class C1 (hotel); class C3 (dwelling houses); class D1 (non-residential institutions); class D2 (assembly or leisure); public realm and landscaping; and associated car and cycle parking, servicing, and access arrangements (with all matters reserved); and

Full planning permission for demolition including multi-storey car park and Barclay Road Annexe; extensions and alterations to Fairfield Halls including

class A3 (food and drink); erection of buildings for flexible class A1 (shops) and/or class A2 (financial and professional services) and/or class A3 (food and drink) and/or class D1 (non-residential institutions) and/or class D2 (assembly and leisure) and class C3 (dwelling houses); change of use of basement car park (part) to class D1 (non-residential institutions); public realm and landscaping; and associated car and cycle parking, servicing, and access arrangements. Please note that this permission included comprehensive parameter plans, design guidelines and design codes to guide the development as it came forward over several phases. The site is located in close proximity to a number of recent development sites.

Wider area within the Masterplan:



Image 6: general location of adjoining and nearby development sites

4.10 **Fairfield Homes** (LBC Ref 19/04516/FUL): Resolution to grant (subject to legal agreement) has been issued for erection of five buildings ranging in height from 7 to 29 storeys to provide 421 residential flats (Use Class C3), flexible commercial space at ground floor of Building A (Use Class A1/A2/A3) and Buildings C and E (A1/A2/A3 and/or B1/D1 or D2) together with associated cycle parking, public realm and landscaping, basement car parking, refuse storage, servicing and access arrangements.

4.11 **College Tower** – referred to as College East in the plan above (LBC ref 19/04987/FUL): Resolution to grant (subject to legal agreement) has been issued for redevelopment of the site to provide a part 49 and part 34 storey building with basements, comprising 836 coliving units (Use Class Sui Generis) within Tower A and 120 residential units (Use Class C3) within Tower B, a cafe (Use Class A3), community use (Use Class D1), associated communal facilities for co-living residents, amenity spaces, cycle parking, disabled parking spaces, refuse and cycle storage and associated landscaping and public realm works

- 4.12 **Mondial House** (LBC ref: 16/00180/P): Planning Permission was granted in 2018 for demolition of the existing office building; erection of a part 35, part 13, part 11 storey building comprising plus basement, to provide 220 flats, 1,787sqm B1 office space, and 490sqm A1 retail floor space with associated works.
- 4.13 **College Annexe** (LBC ref: 20/00663/FUL): Application pending consideration for demolition of existing building and redevelopment of the Croydon College Annexe site to provide a new building with ground and first floor creative and cultural enterprise centre (Class D1/B1) with ancillary exhibition space, and residential units (Class C3) above. Associated works include new landscaped public pedestrian route running through the site from north to south, private and communal amenity space for residents including play space, basement car parking and cycle parking, and temporary landscaping on southern part of the site (the plans show a part 12, part 4 storey building, providing 93 flats above a cultural and creative industries enterprise centre).
- 4.14 In addition in the wider context, there are two relevant schemes on the opposite side of Park Lane which incorporate public realm schemes:
- Taberner House and Queens Gardens: Permission granted in 2017 (and now under construction) for 4 buildings ranging from 13-35 storeys providing 514 flats and commercial space. The proposals include significant re-landscaping of Queens Gardens.
 - Queens Square: Emerging scheme at pre-application for redevelopment of this area (which includes Segas House and proposals already with permission for re-cladding and residential use of the Nestle Tower and associated building). This scheme seeks to create a large public civic square in front of the Town Hall.

Proposal

- 4.15 The Council's ambition are to build a world-class public space in the heart of Croydon;s emerging cultural quarter. In 2018, the Council issued a brief for the space and initiated an OJEU tender process. This is included as Appendix 1.
- 4.16 A multi-disciplinary team made up of MICA Architects, OOZE, Charles Holland Architects, Adam Nathaniel Furman, eHRW, and DHA Design Services Ltd, Gardiner & Theobald and Wasser Werkstatt won the OJEU tender process with a scheme which included the following key design moves:
- Central area with large circular space defined by planting and trees, providing a naturally filtered water mirror reflecting the evolving skyline of Croydon (when wet) and a multi-purpose space for events, markets and concerts (when dry).
 - Adjacent circular grass lawn providing a soft counterpoint and opportunities for relaxation and informal play
 - Public art gateways signalling routes across the site
 - Unified super-sized striped landscaped surface inset with Croydon Terrazzo together with a red 'carpet' entrance for Fairfield Halls.



Image 7: overview image of the winning scheme



Image 8: the 'water field' central water feature and surrounding planting



Image 9: from Fairfield Halls/Park Lane frontage



Image 10: the 'play field' area showing indicative play circle and kiosks

4.17 Given that the scheme was chosen through a rigorous OJEU process, the key design moves and organisation have been set and should remain closely aligned with the winning competition entry. This pre-application process has therefore focused upon the detailed design of the scheme.

5 PRP RESPONSE

5.1 An earlier iteration of the scheme was presented to the Council's Place Review Panel in February 2020. The Panel supported the aspirations and the bold aesthetic choices developed so far, but raised concerns around the robustness and long term sustainability of the scheme particularly with regards to the design of the paving, soft landscaping and central water feature. The Panel stressed that in order to keep hold of the overall aesthetic, the robustness of the scheme is critical to ensure that the vivid colours and landscaping are kept and robust for long term use.

5.2 The panel's main comments are expanded below:

- The panel welcomed the conceptual approach of this competition-winning design and stressed that in order to keep hold of the overall aesthetic in this complex and challenging environment, the robustness of the scheme is critical.
- In particular, a greater understanding of the design of soft landscaping is required, as it is a significant aspect of the aesthetic. The panel questioned the resilience of the soft landscaping. They advised that the urban greening factor should be increased significantly and consideration of sustainable drainage systems and robustness is essential.
- The panel questioned the deliverability of the proposed fountain design and soft landscaping, and strongly recommends bringing a team member(s) on board early on in the design process who has experience delivering large scale, permanent public landscapes with horticultural knowledge and expertise in complex (and naturally filtered) fountain systems.
- The panel had concerns over the overall durability, resilience, and sustainability of the scheme with regards to materials, maintenance and use. A significant number of people will soon live in Central Croydon, so the scheme must also be able to accommodate this population as well.
- The panel recommended that the team interrogate the sustainability of the scheme, on a material by material basis including travel emissions, lifecycle, and end of product life use.
- The scheme should have an accessibility strategy tied into the early stages of the design, to ensure it is accessible to all.
- The panel questioned the current hierarchy of elements in the design, and recommends that certain elements within the scheme may need to be 'curated' and given greater prominence.
- The panel considered that a greater understanding of how the pinstripe pattern evolves depending on site conditions and/or meets other thresholds and smaller areas is required.
- The panel recommended developing an overall colour strategy to ensure that the elements of the proposal work well visually with each other and the overall context.
- The panel advised developing conversations with TfL as soon as possible to discuss the Park Road frontage, including the relationship with idling buses, HVM, the signage across the road and a larger wayfinding strategy alongside other landowners.
- The panel recommended leaving room for some elements of the design to be completed by others in the future. This is not with regards to programming of the space, but considering how artists or others may be able to shape the physical design at a later date.
- The panel requests further information around the long term seasonality and maintenance of the space. They suggested that it is critical to understand the council's capacity to care for the space, and if this resource was to be cut at a later date, to what extent is this scheme is dependent on someone looking after it to succeed.

5.3 Officers generally agreed with and welcome the comments raised by the panel. Since the PRP, officers have been working with the applicant to respond to these comments and the current scheme has been developed as a result.

6 MATERIAL PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS

6.1 The main considerations are:

1. Principle of development
2. Overall design approach
3. Focussed areas
 - Water Field (Central area)
 - Park Lane frontage
 - Play Field
4. Interface with adjoining sites
5. Maintenance

Principle of development (open space and sustainability)

6.2 The site is protected as undesignated open space. The Local Plan and London Plan (and emerging London Plan) seek to preserve and enhance such spaces. Given the nature of the existing layout, with large lawns across the majority of the site, the proposals will clearly result in a reduction in soft landscaping (in terms of overall area). However, officers are supportive of the emerging scheme in terms of the quality and usability of the proposed landscaping scheme. Given the central location and high footfall, the increase in hard standing is considered appropriate. Officers also note that following PRP and pre-application feedback the soft landscaping for the site has been significantly increased.

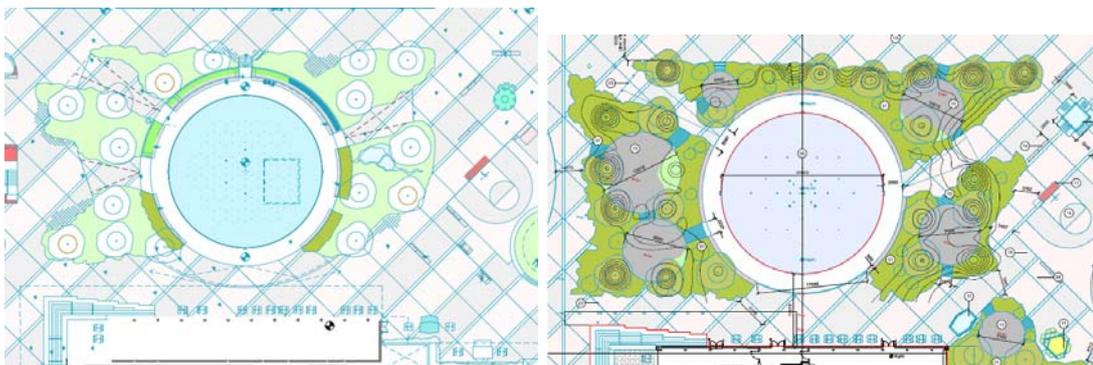


Image 11: landscaping proposals as presented to PRP vs. current landscaping proposals

6.3 Officers advise that the applicant would need to demonstrate how the proposals enhance the quality of the space and demonstrate that sustainability and biodiversity benefits have been fully considered.

6.4 Although the structural and technical limitations of the space are noted (given it is sited upon a podium level above a basement car park), it is expected that the development should incorporate sustainable drainage solutions in order to support the proposed soft landscaping strategy, especially where these will

encourage long term watering solutions and reduce maintenance costs. Whilst a site wide drainage system was installed as part of the previous hybrid permission, officers advise that the applicant undertake further consideration of SUDs solutions specifically to encourage the long term sustainability of the soft landscaped areas.

Overall design approach

- 6.5 The Croydon Local plan Policy SP4.8 states *'The Council with its partners will improve Croydon's public realm to respect, enhance, create local character and distinctiveness, and integrate with the historic environment'*. Policy 7.5 of the current London plan states *'Development should make the public realm comprehensible at a human scale, using gateways, focal points and landmarks as appropriate to help people find their way. Landscape treatment, street furniture and infrastructure should be of the highest quality, have a clear purpose, maintain uncluttered spaces and should contribute to the easy movement of people through the space. Opportunities for the integration of high quality public art should be considered, and opportunities for greening (such as through planting of trees and other soft landscaping wherever possible) should be maximised. Treatment of the public realm should be informed by the heritage values of the place, where appropriate'*. Policy D7 of the emerging London Plan requires proposals to *'Ensure the public realm is well-designed, safe, accessible, inclusive, attractive, well-connected, related to the local and historic context, and easy to understand, service and maintain. Landscape treatment, planting, street furniture and surface materials should be of good quality, fit-for-purpose, durable and sustainable. Lighting, including for advertisements, should be carefully considered and well-designed in order to minimise intrusive lighting infrastructure and reduce light pollution'*.
- 6.6 The overall design approach for this scheme would make a significant positive contribution to the town centre's public realm, subject to detailed comments below.
- Walking, accessibility, cycling, and vehicular strategy*
- 6.7 The applicant was advised to give further consideration to the key movement corridors and demonstrate how the design seeks to address these. This has been further developed and officers are supportive.
- 6.8 The levels and falls within the podium are key to ensuring that the scheme can achieve step free access to the whole site and officers have requested further detailed plans to demonstrate that the design achieves this. Officers have requested the applicant give further consideration to the accessibility of the key design elements during both day time and night time conditions to ensure that the design is as accessible as possible for all users.
- 6.9 A delineated cycle route is required as part of the brief; this is currently proposed along the Park Lane frontage which is supported by officers subject to confirmation that it is of a suitable width and appropriate delineation. The retention of the current ramp access to the basement means that the cycle route cannot run along the pavement edge, but has to loop around the back of the ramp to ensure that it would not conflict with the bus standing. The cycle route

has been progressed since the PRP and the last pre-application meeting and its layout and positioning is more logical.

- 6.10 Some vehicle access is required within the site. Emergency services access is required along the northern edge to accommodate the fire strategy for the adjacent Fairfield Homes scheme and it is likely that event and maintenance vehicles will need access to the square from time to time. It is expected that any vehicle access will be from Park Lane and this needs to be formalised with Transport for London. Officers have requested that the design team consider how vehicles may traverse the site and whether any public realm interventions (and HVM) are required to delineate or restrict vehicle access.

Hardscape Materials

- 6.11 The winning scheme incorporated a 'red carpet tapestry – Croydon Terrazzo' of striped paving which the applicant has proposed to implement using large concrete panels which would be laid in-situ with joints facilitating services and connections.

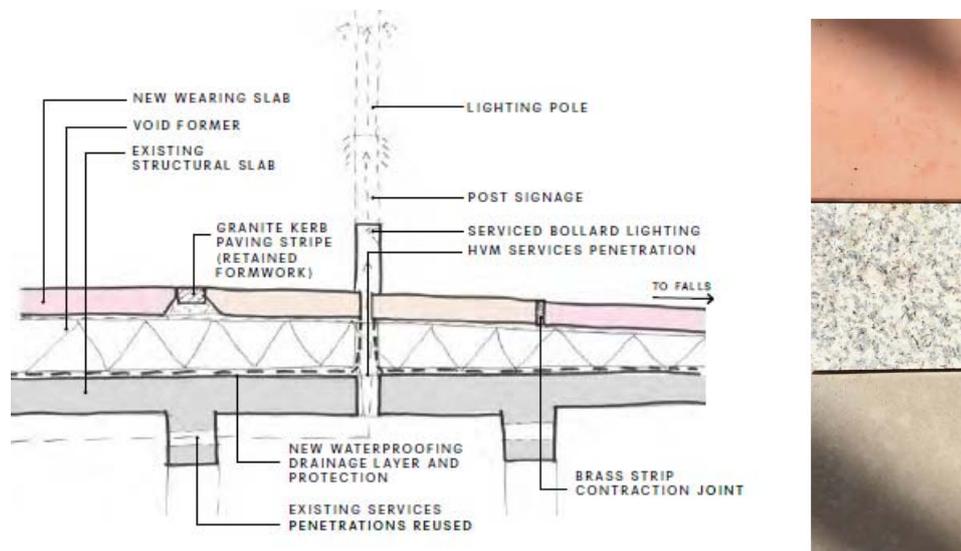


Image 12: section through proposed paving showing services and indicative material palette

- 6.12 Officers fully support the bold paving graphic, but need more comfort on longevity and maintenance of the concrete paving. PRP questioned the durability of the colour pigmentation, robustness and future maintenance and repair. Officers have requested further information and precedents to demonstrate that the material would be robust and to demonstrate how future maintenance could be managed. The information and precedents provided have been useful to understand the material, but officers require more information to demonstrate that a high quality finish can be achieved including colour pigment options and aggregate finish, as well as detailed information about laying method, relationship with furniture and structures, and long term maintenance regime and repair/replacement strategy.

Soft landscaping

- 6.13 The applicant has engaged a landscape architect and this has helped progress the planting strategy in a positive manner. As indicated above, the soft

landscaped areas have increased substantially since the initial proposals. Detailed planting strategies including tree sizes and soil volume are of significant importance to the success of this scheme. The overall strategy has been developed with reference to local natural landscapes, other landscaped designs and the local microclimate which is supported.

- 6.14 Given that the public realm is positioned upon a podium, this limits the availability of soil environment for the soft landscaping. Officers have requested a soil volume study to ensure that appropriate trees species have been selected for the site, particularly in terms of longevity and health.
- 6.15 In addition, the applicant has begun to consider how the planting strategy would respond to seasonal changes and how parts of the site respond to sunlight to ensure that it would provide interest throughout the year. Further work is required, but the information to date has been moving in a positive direction.

Hostile Vehicle Mitigation

- 6.16 It is not yet clear from the proposals where hostile vehicle mitigation is required and further testing needs to identify any risk areas. The proposals currently suggest mitigation to the front of Fairfield Halls in the form of simple bollards and to other areas with planter structures positioned to form part of the HVM strategy. The applicant is in discussions with the Metropolitan Police and officers have sought further clarification. As much of the HVM elements as possible should be integrated into the design and provide additional uses as public realm furniture and features.

Wayfinding, lighting and flag poles

- 6.17 The proposals include a number of 'wayfinding' public art structures. The key elements are a feature to the basement ramp located to the Park Lane frontage and a beacon to the north east corner of the site (on the steps down from the Hazeldean Bridge). These elements are discussed in more detail in the area specific sections below. A further gateway sign is proposed above the Park Lane road underpass, although the applicant has not confirmed whether this is currently within the scope of the project. These elements are fully endorsed by officers.
- 6.18 Officers are working with the applicant to ensure the design approach and colour palette for the various wayfinding elements (and other public realm materials) are cohesive and vibrant. Indicative details have been provided suggesting that the wayfinding structures (and kiosks) would be lit at night and would form part of the wider lighting strategy for the site, which is supported. Officers continue to work with the applicant to understand how the lighting strategy would aid wayfinding and facilitate the programming and use of the site through the different areas and at different times of the day/night. It is understood that the lighting for the site will need to make use of bespoke elements to ensure that they provide suitable functionality; whilst bespoke solutions can add to the quality of the space, this must be balanced against maintenance and longevity.
- 6.19 Large flag structures are proposed, which officers feel are a positive, playful element to the overall design. How they relate to the rest of the scheme and how many should be included to the Park Lane frontage is being reviewed.

Water Field (Central Area)

- 6.20 Officers feel that the central area of the square is coming forward positively and recent development of a more detailed soft landscaping strategy is welcomed.
- 6.21 Whilst the central water feature initially included natural filtration (using reed beds as part of the fountain feature) the practical delivery of this in terms of maintenance, together with advice from specialist firms means a chlorinated system is now proposed. Officers are satisfied that the water feature would achieve a high quality central feature.
- 6.22 The central circle would provide a large fountain and 'water mirror' which would be able to work in a variety of variations and reflect Croydon's current and emerging skyline. In addition, it would be drained to provide an area for events, fairs and other uses. This multi-functional space is fully endorsed by officers as an exciting and innovative addition to the town centre.
- 6.23 Officers are in dialogue with the applicant on the detail of the water storage for these elements and how it links into the SUDs strategy.

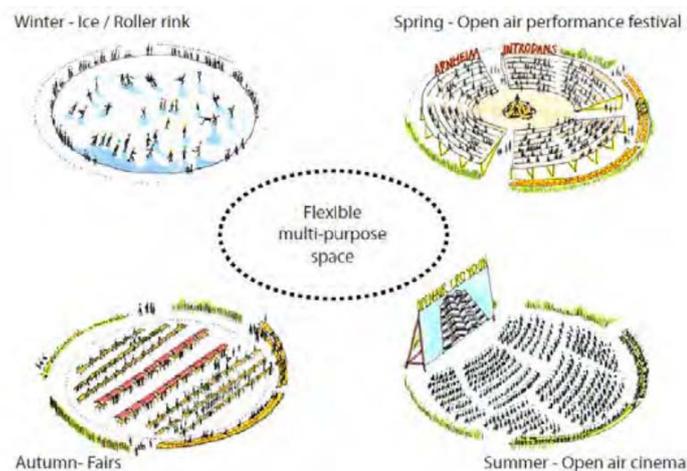


Image 13: multi-purpose use of central water circle (other than fountain and water mirror)

- 6.24 The water feature would be surrounded by landscaping and seating which is supported. This has been developed significantly, increasing in size and quality, factoring in pedestrian flows and seating areas within small circles of soft landscaped spaces within the wider soft landscaped areas.
- 6.25 Officers are supportive of the design development of the soft landscaped areas. As the scheme develops further studies should indicate how people would use the soft landscaped areas and review the layout and design together with sun/light studies and programming of the space for events and other day to day uses. Officers have encouraged the applicant to consider incorporating more benches and informal seating into the outer perimeter to supplement the areas of grass so that more people can benefit from the shelter of the landscaping. The applicant has begun working up a detailed soft landscaping strategy which is positive and we continue to work on the detail of the planting mix.

- 6.26 Land levels for the water feature and sight lines can be achieved to ensure visibility throughout the space from a safety perspective.
- 6.27 The relationship to the northern boundary with Croydon College (railings and light-well) needs further resolution.

Park Lane and Fairfield Halls Forecourt

Ramp and wayfinding structures

- 6.28 This area of the scheme has undergone significant design development. The existing ramp structures would be retained within the forecourt to provide additional access to the basement car park. Officers are satisfied that the public realm has been designed to work with the retention of the ramp. In addition, officers are currently satisfied that there are alternative access routes to the basement and a lift is not required as part of this scheme (further details have been requested to confirm this).
- 6.29 The original design of the wayfinding structures from the winning scheme have been adapted to work with the existing ramp and alterations would be made to incorporate a 'forest' tree planted at basement level. Both of these key elements help to ensure that this feature would deliver the original aims of the scheme. The design of the wayfinding structures are supported by officers, with bold aesthetic which are very visible and play a key role inviting people into the space visually and physically. The structures incorporate specifically designed tiles which reflect the architectural history of the area. In addition, the applicant has explored ways in which the tiling of the wayfinding elements could stretch into the basement (down the ramp) to improve the visual connection between the basement and public realm levels. These elements are supported.

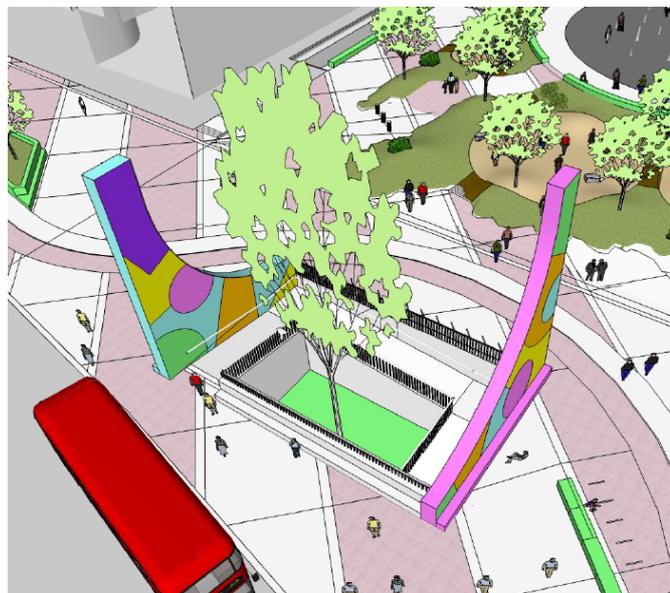


Image 14: aerial view of ramp and wayfinding structures



Image 15: view from Fairfield Halls forecourt of wayfinding structures

6.30 Whilst this element is progressing positively, further work is required on the heights of these structures (how they relate to other vertical elements/structures and buildings in and surrounding the square) and how the balustrades/railings are integrated into the structure.

Cycle path

6.31 As a result of retaining the existing ramp, the cycle path would have to sweep behind this structure rather than follow the Park Lane kerb-line to restrict conflict between the cycle lane, bus stop and the entrance to the ramp.

6.32 Officer's view is that the geometries for this area should be dictated by pedestrian movement and planters rather than the cycle path route. Recent iterations have taken on board this advice providing a more successful relationship with the paving design and street planters. The applicant's rationale is to use the path as a means to create defined areas along the frontage for greater intimacy (particularly around the bus stops) which is a positive move. Further clarity is needed, particularly in terms of seating for this use and as addressed above, HVM requirements need to be incorporated into the design.

6.33 The cycle route would extend across Park Lane towards the Town Centre and to the Fairfield Halls forecourt to connect to a cycle route on Barclay Road. The current temporary cycle path does not account for pedestrian desire lines from Barclay Road at the junction between the cycle path and the lay-by entrance; further consideration is needed here.

Fairfield Halls Forecourt

6.34 The Fairfield Halls forecourt is constrained by the need for drop-off facilities (coaches and taxis) and disabled parking. Officers have queried whether the current width of the lay-by can be reduced and rationalised. Since PRP and pre-app feedback, the applicant has increased the number of trees to provide a 'copse' of trees which officers feel gives them more presence and may create a better microclimate from the prevailing winds whilst retaining views of the Halls. It is anticipated that the subway stairs to the forecourt are to be retained and the applicant has begun to consider how this could be adapted to provide additional planting and tie it into the overall design of the public realm.

6.35 The forecourt currently incorporates bollards to the front entrance of Fairfield Halls. Whilst officers acknowledge the potential need for HVM measures, as identified above these elements should as much as possible be integrated into the landscape design.

6.36 The proposals includes street markings or paving to Park Lane to emphasise the connection of the pedestrian crossing to Queens Gardens, the principle of which is endorsed by officers. The applicant has had initial discussions with TfL about the design and extent of the 'carpet' concept and it is currently proposed to the pedestrian crossing. Officers are working with the applicant to ensure materials would be durable and provide the visual impact and clarity of the original concept.

Play Field

6.37 The 'Play Field' of the public realm is the area with the most opportunity for playfulness to be reflected in its design given its intended use. The key elements for this include the provision of a 'play circle' soft landscaped area, a basketball hoop and half court, 'skateable' furniture, a 'grand stand' and 'kiosk' structures. These elements all have the ability to enliven the space and make it a lively and inviting place for multiple uses which is fully supported.

6.38 Officers feel that the most recent iteration has lost some of the playfulness of previous versions. The applicant team is aware and are working on updates in advance of Committee, to be included in their presentation.

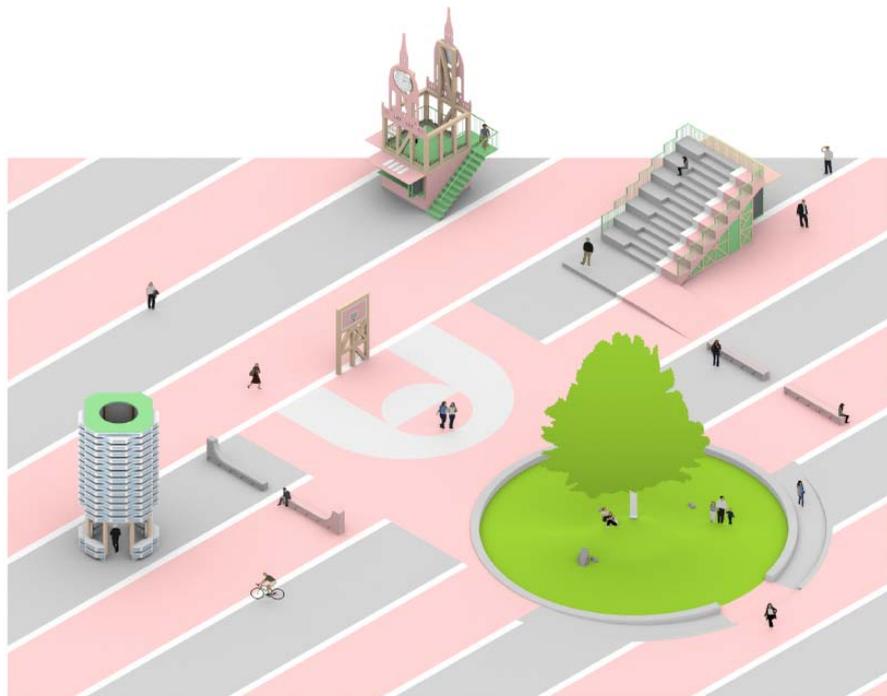


Image 16: most recent drawings

Grass Circle

6.39 The grass circle provides a good counter point to the water circle of the main square. Since the original concept, the applicant has updated the design

removing the 'maypole' and canopy structure and replacing it with a mature tree. Whilst the principle of the grass circle is supported, more work is required to fully understand how this space may be programmed and how the microclimate may impact upon the use. The use of an edge to the circle for seating and/or skateable features is supported subject to further details.

Skate features and basketball court

- 6.40 The Fair Field has a significant heritage within the skating community and officers are keen to ensure this comes through in the design. Officers support an integrated approach so that the structures can be used by all (i.e. skateboards can skate while others pass through, sit and play in the area). Given the different demands of the space from skateboarders and pedestrians, officers have sought to better understand the logistics of how skateboarders travel and use the site, and have requested a spacing diagram showing distance between obstacles to ensure there is enough space for skaters to have a run-up to the obstacle and landing space. The applicant is consulting a specialist about the design of this area. The construction of the skateboard features requires input from a specialist contractor to ensure that they would be suitably robust and fit for purpose.
- 6.41 Officers feel that the most recent iteration of the basketball hoop and skate element have lost some of the playfulness of previous versions. The applicant team is aware and are working on updates in advance of Committee, to be included in their presentation.

Kiosks and Grand Stand

- 6.42 The design of some of the kiosk elements has evolved as a result of public consultation (in the form of public workshops and work with College students) undertaken in February 2020. Perhaps because of this, the design is less developed than the rest of the scheme. The principle of the kiosks and grand stand are fully supported, adding to the quality of the space.
- 6.43 Further work is required on the longevity and programming of the kiosks and grandstand. Officers have sought further testing and consideration with regards to potential uses for the kiosks and their positioning within the public realm. The applicant intends to undertake further studies to understand appropriate uses for the kiosks, but this is not expected to be ready in time for submission of a planning application. This needs careful consideration.
- 6.44 Officers feel that the kiosks are a key element of the original design and the playful character of the space. Further design development is needed in advance of a formal planning application, as the success of the Play Field relies on their inclusion. Officers have therefore encouraged the applicant to consider how the kiosks could be designed to demonstrate how they may function when considering a range of likely uses (including retail, café or community use function) or were they not to have any function (i.e. if delivered as landscape follies). Facilities such as electricity and plumbing need to be provided to ensure flexibility over their lifetime. Officers are satisfied that subject to this being suitable demonstrated, the final use and detailed design could be secured by condition.

6.45 The design of the kiosks have progressed since the public consultation. Further information has been requested by officers to understand the logic for the positioning of the kiosks, how they relate to other vertical elements in the square and the landscape, as well as their materiality and maintenance.

Interface with adjoining sites (including delivery of step free route to George Street)

6.46 The interface with the current and emerging context is key to the success of the scheme. All of the proposed adjoining schemes have been designed to interface with the approved public realm levels (as part of the hybrid permission – upon which this current public realm scheme is based).

6.47 The applicant has been an active member of coordination workshops arranged by LPA officers between the landowners of the adjacent development sites. The objectives of these meetings is to facilitate the delivery of a step free route from East Croydon Station into the heart of the Cultural Quarter and beyond, and to seek a consistent public realm design from George Street into the Fair Field and through to Barclay Road.

6.48 The red line currently includes the main square and park lane frontage. The project brief also included design of the step free route to George Street. The two recent schemes which Committee resolved to grant permission for (College Tower and Fairfield Homes) would provide a step free route from the Fair Field to College Road before the route would pass through the 101 George Street site to meet George Street. The plan below indicates what the three schemes would deliver:



Image 17: plan (from the College Tower proposal) of the public realm to be delivered in the NE corner as part of College Tower and Fairfield Homes

6.49 The applicant has aspirations to realise an expanded public realm in this area, including wider steps and a public art feature which officers support. Further clarity is required on this aspect of the scheme. The wider steps and public art feature would require planning permission and officers consider the red line for this scheme should be extended to include it.



Image 18: view of the wayfinding structure and wider steps

6.50 In addition, the aspiration is for the hardstanding and landscape language of the main square to continue along the adjacent routes into the site. As part of the coordination workshops, the developers of the adjacent sites (101 George Street, College Tower, College Annexe and Fairfield Homes) have all indicated that they are in principle open to working with the applicant in order to align the hard and soft landscaping details across the masterplan area. Further work on this is required.

Maintenance

6.51 Whilst not strictly a planning matter, maintenance (and associated costs of maintenance) is critical to the long term success of the scheme. Officers have encouraged the applicant to have discussions with relevant internal and external stakeholders to ensure that the scheme is evolving to take account of any specific end user needs and maintenance arrangements. Whilst it is understood some concerns have been raised by various stakeholders (particularly around long term maintenance) the applicant has made amendments to the scheme as a result.

7 SPECIFIC FEEDBACK REQUESTED

7.1 In view of the above, it is suggested that Members focus on the following issues:

- Overall design intent and approach

- The design of the water field, the functionality of the space and soft landscaping design
- The design of the Park Lane frontage, including reuse of the existing ramp, design of wayfinding structures and design of the Fairfield Halls forecourt
- Design and layout of the play field, including skateboarding features
- Design and use of kiosk structures
- Delivery and design of George Street step free route
- Any other matter that members would like to see developed as part of the proposal.

Appendix 1: key design brief objectives

The key brief objectives were as follows:

- Create a multi-functional open space (combination of hard and soft landscape) between Fairfield Halls and Croydon College capable of accommodating events, performances and activities, as well as allowing for relaxation
- Provide a hard central gathering space in Fair Field
- Provide informal amenity space for adjacent residential development and the wider Croydon residential population including informal play
- Create a space that will enthuse and excite, integrating water feature(s) and public art (multi-disciplinary). Both should be an integrated and holistic part of the design with early collaboration with specialists during design development
- Include the infrastructure required to enable a wide range of future events and activities (power, water, lighting etc.)
- Build on successes of the interim improvements and enablement works if appropriate, including re-using the new slab level and associated utilities
- Provide a high quality pedestrian route linking the new Fair Field and associated public realm and East Croydon Station via College Road and George Street
- Integrate successfully with surrounding and nearby public space projects; in particular the redevelopment of Queens Gardens, improvements to Park Lane and the Park Lane gyratory and the development of a new Town Hall Square on Katherine Street
- Integrate the key cycle route from College Road to Barclay road
- Celebrate the history of this important site including links to the post war sister city of Arnhem, Netherlands