

Cultural Strategy for Battersea and Nine Elms

2017 – 2020

Introduction

The Nine Elms Vauxhall Partnership's ambition has always been to develop the Vauxhall Nine Elms Battersea (VNEB) Opportunity Area as a vibrant and successful 'place', connected to the surrounding communities and to the rest of London.

The Opportunity Area is made up of four distinct neighbourhoods – Battersea, Nine Elms, Vauxhall and Albert Embankment– each with its own identity and each at a different stage of maturity, with different priorities and needs. However, the boundaries between each neighbourhood are porous, especially to visitors from beyond the local areas. Recognising this, each borough will develop its own strategy for culture in the neighbourhoods within its remit which aligns with the Partnership's vision. These strategies will seek to achieve the Partnership's objectives and weave together the cultural contributions of all Partners, whilst allowing the delivery of neighbourhood initiatives which respond to local priorities.

A **Nine Elms Vauxhall Cultural Steering Group** provides advocacy and governance for the area's cultural vision and an **Arts and Events Programming Group** - which includes public and private stakeholders, artists and arts organisations delivering cultural programmes in the area - ensures a joined-up approach to the area's growing cultural offer.

Wandsworth Council recognises that arts and culture are essential to delivering this vision and this document summarises the Council's strategy for achieving the cultural vision for the Nine Elms and Battersea part of the VNEB Opportunity Area.

Vision

Wandsworth Council's vision is that Nine Elms and Battersea will be viewed firmly as a dynamic, successful mixed-use district with diverse opportunities for people to make their home, build their business or enjoy the best of London's culture, entertainment and shopping.

Our goal for 2020 is that a vibrant cultural agenda will have secured Nine Elms and Battersea's place firmly on the Capital's arts map, connecting local residents to surrounding communities and the rest of London.

We will achieve this vision by enhancing the already distinctive neighbourhoods of Nine Elms and Battersea, drawing on their history and location to deliver an authentic, responsive and relevant cultural strategy that aligns with the Local Plan and the Council's wider approach to supporting culture across the Borough.

Context

- Market Gardens along the Thames

Nine Elms and Battersea have long and fascinating histories. Both central London neighbourhoods sit along the River Thames on former marshland that was reclaimed gradually from the 16th century onwards. This provided the area immediately adjacent to the riverbank with particularly rich alluvial soil, which proved to be ideal for the flourishing market gardens that lined the banks from the 17th century. Nine Elms and Battersea fed and flowered London and beyond right up until the advent of the railways in 1838, which brought the consequent industrialisation of the area and loss of horticultural land.

Battersea in particular was famed for the size, abundance and quality of its amazing asparagus crop - known as 'Battersea Bundles' - and its bountiful lavender fields. Nine Elms found acclaim in the quality of its cut flowers and the skill of its farmers in producing exotic fruits like melons and pineapples. This wonderful legacy continues today at New Covent Garden Market, which continues to feed and flower London and to work internationally with traders across the globe.

We are immensely proud to be able to draw upon this rich, international and diverse horticultural resource, which provides a framework for future creative programming.

- Riverside Connectivity

A key aspect of the area's past and present is its central London location on the banks of the Thames. This riverside connectivity has been crucial to its economic fortune as a thriving market garden then industrial area, and pivotal to its cultural vibrancy as a place of pleasure gardens and fun. The Thames plays a fundamental role in the area's public realm and its environmental ecology, providing a vital blue lung and respite from the bustle of the busy streets. The regeneration of the area has opened up new routes along the Thames for the first time in centuries, with the long-term ambition to connect like a string of pearls the cultural spaces of the South Bank up to Battersea Park.

The sunsets of Nine Elms and Battersea are rightly celebrated and new pocket gardens, with seating and temporary follies by leading artists and designers at regular points along the path, encourage people to linger and enjoy vistas immortalised by artist JMW Turner. Proposals for a new Nine Elms Bridge would play a key role in connecting our communities with the rest of London and furthering cultural exchange with partners across the river.

We will continue to celebrate the central role of the Thames as a key cultural asset, and this will be an important thread that runs through our cultural programming.

- Pioneering Design Heritage

Battersea and Nine Elms have between them a long and distinguished design heritage. The area has been the location of a number of firsts and pioneering inventions that have had a lasting legacy. This legacy continues today at the Royal College of Art - one of the area's key cultural assets.

The skyline of London boasts many architectural icons, but arguably Gilbert Scott's epic Battersea Power Station is one of the foremost. It is one of the largest brick buildings in the world and powered London's electricity for 40 years. Chelsea Bridge and embankments were designed by Sir Joseph Bazalgette, one of the UK's greatest civil engineers. The area has played a key role in engineering history. One of the earliest railway terminuses was located at Nine Elms in 1838. In 1844 the first public telegraph was sent from Nine Elms to Southport, helping to transform international communication for ever. The Shorts Brothers - Eustace, Horace and Oswald - were Britain's first aircraft manufacturers and pioneered British aviation including 'heavier than air' balloons and, later, light aircraft design from a railway arch in Battersea in 1906.

We will celebrate this incredible legacy of design innovation as a key theme in our ongoing cultural programming and will also reflect this in our long-term plans for the area.

Guiding Principles

The cultural strategy will be underpinned by four broad principles:

- **Creative industries** – securing cultural space, recognising their importance in place-making
- **Sustainability** – celebrating best practice in the arts and promoting long-term community well-being and cohesion through opportunities to participate
- **Heritage** – celebrating both the local built environment and the area's natural world assets
- **International exchange** – recognising the importance of the new US Embassy and the redeveloped markets and new Food Exchange at Covent Garden Market, both of which hinge on global partnerships.

The Approach

We want to enable Nine Elms and Battersea to continue to flourish by supporting long-term sustainable specialist cultural infrastructure to develop. We will therefore promote and support the growth of three **creative clusters** centred on cultural activities that have an already established legacy and relevance to our local communities. These clusters will provide a framework for the continued cultural regeneration of the neighbourhoods of Nine Elms and Battersea:

- In celebration of the area's market garden heritage we will promote and support the emergence of a **Food and Horticulture Quarter**, centred around the New Covent Garden Market and Food Exchange;
- Given the role the area's riverscape has played in inspiring notable visual artists, we will promote and support the emergence of a Visual Art Quarter towards the eastern end of the district, complementing the cluster of galleries in and around neighbouring Vauxhall;
- Marking the area's long-standing reputation for design and engineering, we will promote and support the emergence of the **Battersea Design Quarter** as part of the further-reaching South London Innovation Corridor.

Our local support will not only provide the area with an authentic narrative in the crowded market of new 'cultural quarters' in London, but also respond to the boom in growth of the creative industries in the UK (worth £92 billion GVA in 2017) and in particular in London, where the sector provides 11.9% of all jobs, to the benefit of our local schools and businesses.

We will support the development of the creative clusters by:

- Programming, commissioning and participating in meanwhile activities and events that engage and offer opportunities to local people to participate and make culture
- Facilitating ambitious cultural partnerships and commissioning more consistent and strategically significant cultural events that raise the area's profile and attract visitors
- Attracting and supporting key cultural anchors to the area for the long-term, thereby underpinning a broader, thriving ecology of artists and creative organisations

Outcomes and Impact

The goals of the programme are that by 2020:

- Nine Elms and Battersea will have a clear and well-known identity as a great cultural district
- At least two world-class cultural institutions will have established a permanent base in Nine Elms, underpinning its reputation as a compelling location for a range of cultural occupiers
- Increasing numbers of creative enterprises will have located into the area, bringing about an uplift in local skills and training
- Thousands of local residents, employees and visitors will have engaged with the Nine Elms and Battersea cultural programmes and we will be able to demonstrate positive reputational benefits as a result of this
- Nine Elms and Battersea will be actively promoted, reported on and viewed through a much wider and diverse range of channels than today as a result of the arts and cultural programme, with commensurate opportunity for our partners to build on this with collaborative cultural programmes and communications strategies.

Based on activity to date across the area and including partner programmes, we expect an enhanced annual arts and events programme to engage with 25,000 people in 2018 attending events and/or accessing online material via social media, 30,000 in 2019 and 40,000 + from 2020 onwards.

Increasing attendance will reflect the development of the area, including the arrival of new cultural and creative occupiers and will be accompanied by an expert and high profile Nine Elms and Battersea focused marketing and communications strategy that promotes the area as a cultural and tourist destination.