Mayor welcomes Smithsonian decision to join formal talks on new base at east London’s 'Olympicopolis’

- World-renowned Smithsonian Institution opens official talks over a new London base at Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park
- Move approved by the Smithsonian board at its meeting yesterday (Monday 26 January)
- Decision follows series of meetings between the Smithsonian, the Mayor and LLDC
- Smithsonian would join V&A, UCL, University of the Arts London, and Sadler’s Wells at the centre of a new university and cultural district

The Mayor of London, Boris Johnson today (27 January) welcomed the Smithsonian Institution’s decision to open talks on creating a presence as part of the ‘Olympicopolis’ project on Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park.

The Smithsonian’s Board of Regents voted yesterday to hold formal talks with the London Legacy Development Corporation on terms for the world’s largest museum and research complex to be part of the new university and cultural district in east London.

If negotiations are successful the Smithsonian would take up residence alongside the Victoria and Albert Museum, University of the Arts London and Sadler’s Wells on the 76,000m2 site on Stratford Waterfront. University College London will also create a new university campus on the Park to the south of the ArcelorMittal Orbit.

It will mark the first time in the Smithsonian’s 168-year history that the Institution has ventured beyond U.S. borders for a long-term exhibition venue. The 40,000-square-foot gallery is expected to open in 2021 and will feature permanent and rotating exhibits, programs and activities, offering a platform for its vast collections and expertise in history, art, culture and science.
The Mayor of London, Boris Johnson, said: “It would be a massive coup to attract the Smithsonian Institution to east London. The Smithsonian is a truly extraordinary and unique organisation and I am absolutely thrilled that we are progressing talks regarding its involvement in the world-class arts and education quarter we are creating in Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park.”

Chief Executive of the London Legacy Development Corporation, David Goldstone, said: “To have the world’s largest museum and research complex taking such interest in the project shows the massive potential Olympicopolis has to offer. We look forward to very positive and productive talks.”

Chair of the Board of Regents, John McCarter, said: “This enterprising initiative from the Mayor and LLDC has tremendous potential. It is an impressive project and the Smithsonian looks forward to exploring the possibilities of this project.”

The ‘Olympicopolis’ scheme is expected to deliver 3,000 jobs, 1.5 million additional visitors and £2.8 billion of economic value to Stratford and the surrounding area.

In July the Mayor announced an international design competition for the university and cultural district on Stratford Waterfront. This had more than 1,000 architects, master planners, place makers, engineers and landscape designers from across the globe register their interest. A shortlist was announced in December 2014 with the winning team to be announced this spring.

The Mayor’s vision for ‘Olympicopolis’ takes its inspiration from the achievements of Prince Albert, who used the proceeds of the 1851 Great Exhibition to create ‘Albertopolis’ – the 86 acre site around Exhibition Road in South Kensington that is today considered one of the world’s pre-eminent scientific, educational, artistic and cultural hubs.

Culture

V&A E20 will occupy 20,000m2 and will present the museum’s outstanding collections in never-before-seen ways, greatly enhancing access to 1000 years of design, architecture, art and performance and encouraging public participation in almost every aspect of museum activities. Permanent galleries on site will include the first dedicated museum space in the UK to document the full breadth of digital design and begin to write the design history of that fast moving field. There will be space for a rolling exhibition programme curated by the V&A with international partners, as well as studio spaces for new and emerging practitioners.

Sadler’s Wells aims to create a 7,000m2 venue with a 600 seat dance theatre to complement its existing venues cementing London’s position as one of the world’s greatest centres for dance. The new venue will provide flexible ‘making’ spaces for research and development and producing new work, facilities for a Choreographic School, and for a Hip Hop Academy.

Education
UCL East will provide 125,000 m² of space. The first phase of 50,000 m² will bring together expertise across disciplines, with the aim of forging new connections between researchers and business; fostering radical innovation, new insights and new industries. They will include the UCL Generator the university’s first School of Design. A UCL Museum of the Future, a reinvention of the university museum for the 21st century, the UCL Centre for Experimental Engineering, which will be established to address the acute skills shortage in engineering and develop new approaches to experiential learning in engineering, alongside prototyping and manufacturing facilities. UCL Innovation will focus on technology and UCL Living will comprise living space for undergraduates, postgraduate research students, as well as early career academic staff.

UAL’s 32,000 m² site will create a research and education hub for the global fashion industry, near the traditional heart of the East End fashion trade. It will bring together London College of Fashion’s 6,500 students and staff for the first time in the college’s 100 year history. The new campus will include two major research centres focusing on sustainability and innovation in the fashion industry. It will provide widespread access to advanced fashion technology, business incubators, and a changing programme of public exhibitions.

Ends

Notes to editors:

- London’s newest visitor destination, **Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park**, is a place unlike any other. Visitors to the Park are able to enjoy beautiful parklands and waterways, world-famous sporting venues, arts and events and spectacular views from the ArcelorMittal Orbit. As a new heart for east London, the Park will also provide new homes, jobs and a cultural and education quarter.

- **The London Legacy Development Corporation** promotes and delivers physical, social, economic and environmental regeneration in Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park and the surrounding area, in particular by maximising the legacy of the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games. For more information visit [QueenElizabethOlympicPark.co.uk](http://QueenElizabethOlympicPark.co.uk), follow us on Twitter [@noordinarypark](https://twitter.com/noordinarypark) and like us on Facebook [facebook.com/QueenElizabethOlympicPark](https://facebook.com/QueenElizabethOlympicPark)

- Since its founding in 1846, the Smithsonian Institution has been committed to inspiring generations through knowledge and discovery. The Smithsonian is the world’s largest museum and research complex, consisting of 19 museums and galleries, the National Zoological Park and nine research facilities. There are 6,400 Smithsonian employees and 5,500 volunteers. There were 28 million visits to the Smithsonian in 2014. The total number of objects, works of
art and specimens at the Smithsonian is estimated at nearly 138 million, including more than 126 million specimens and artifacts at the National Museum of Natural History. www.smithsonian.org

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