

PRESS RELEASE

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Open-City and Barking and Dagenham Council appoint an Independent Chair for the Barking and Dagenham Residents' Design Review Panel

Open-City, the leading architecture and advocacy organisation, has appointed urban designer Matt Lally to chair the Barking and Dagenham Residents' Urban Design Forum.

As chair, Lally will bring an independent and impartial voice to the established Residents Urban Design Forum. This pioneering initiative was set up by Barking and Dagenham Council just over two years ago; Open City devised, and provided, the training to the initial residents. The appointment continues Open-City input into the Forum as the provider of design awareness training, with the Council seeking to refresh the knowledge of existing members and integrate 14 new members.

The Forum provides pre-application advice on development proposals and planning policies with potentially significant impacts on the Borough. It allows community representatives to offer direct comment on such proposals, and the Forum is thought to be one of only a handful of its kind in the country. Open-City's approach to the training and development of residents is likely to have application in similar panels across London.

A founding director of the urban design practice, Matrix Partnership, Lally brings with him significant planning and design experience from a range of UK and international projects.

In London, he has worked closely with communities on estate regeneration schemes in Hackney and Bexley and has undertaken training and research in his role as an enabler for the former Commission for Architecture and Built Environment (CABE). He is also a visiting tutor in Urban Design at The Bartlett, University College London. His approachable and accessible style will bring out the creative and innovative side of the residents participating in the Forum meetings.

Richard Crutchley, Head of Advocacy at Open-City, said: "We are delighted to have attracted someone of Matt's calibre to chair the Forum in Barking and Dagenham. We are sure that his flexible, informed and proactive, approach to dealing with issues in delivering major development will inspire the residents involved. I'm sure that the Forum will continue to flourish under his stewardship."

Matt Lally, said: "This is a great opportunity for me to develop and advocate this innovative approach to community involvement in Barking and Dagenham's future. So much has been learnt in this borough in the past few years about the impact good design and planning can have, and

constructively channeling the enthusiasms, local knowledge and expertise of local residents is key to that. I'm very pleased to be asked to come on board and help move the process further forward. I'm sure we can go from strength to strength, and perhaps encourage other councils to adopt a similar system in capturing local views. What this is all about is ensuring that those that know most about a place - the local residents themselves - have a strong guiding hand in shaping their own environment. The Council has demonstrated in recent years that they expect high standards of design to be applied, and is deservedly getting widespread recognition for their efforts. The Residents Urban Design Forum has a key role to ensure these standards are applied in practice and I very much look forward to playing my part in the process of positive change."

Councillor Cameron Geddes, Barking and Dagenham Council Cabinet Member for Regeneration said: "Working with Open-City to appoint Matt has been a fantastic opportunity to extend the work the Council is doing with the Residents' Urban Design Forum, giving it greater independence. The funding from the Design Council, which has enabled us to do this work, allows the Council to continue with this innovative means of incorporating residents' valuable knowledge into new developments' in the borough".

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Notes to Editors:

About Open-City

Open-City is an independent, not-for-profit organisation that aims to be at the centre of creating better places. It champions excellence in design quality and advocates for an inclusive and informed approach to the development of London.

Now in its twentieth year, and with a strong basis of experience, expertise and research, Open-City encourages dialogue, debate and learning about how architecture and public space affects our daily lives, and to give people the tools and language to enable people to discover and understand how they can make informed decisions and really influence change in the built environment.

They are the only organisation that actively involves such a variety of stakeholders across London, connecting up those that plan, design and build the city to those that live and work in the city, both through their own action research and in their advocacy, education and engagement programmes.

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