

Press release

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First phase of IWM London masterplan granted planning permission

Southwark Council has approved the first phase of Foster + Partners masterplan for IWM's (Imperial War Museums') flagship branch in London.

The strategic masterplan is designed to meet the museum's long-term needs. By bringing clarity to the building's plan, allowing intuitive circulation and arranging the exhibition chronologically by floor, the design optimises the exhibition spaces and will transform the experience for visitors. The initial phase is focused on reconfiguring the building's central hall, together with creating a new series of galleries to commemorate the centenary of the First World War in 2014. The blind brick arches along the western facade will be reopened, forging new connections between the building and Geraldine Mary Harmsworth Park and allowing the museum café to extend outside.

Work on the first phase of the project is planned to begin at the end of the year and the museum will close temporarily in 2013. Future phases include proposals for a new entrance, scooped out of the existing forecourt, and major new exhibition spaces.

Diane Lees, Director-General, IWM:

"We are delighted that the London Borough of Southwark have granted planning permission for this unique project to reinvigorate and transform IWM London in time for the Centenary of the First World War, a landmark event for Britain and the world. IWM was founded during the First World War as a lasting memorial to all those who played their part in the conflict. Our brand new galleries will allow us to continue this work in the twenty-first century, helping to keep the history and personal recollections of the war alive for future generations."

Michael Jones, Partner at Foster + Partners:

"We are delighted that Southwark Council gave unanimous approval to the first phase of our masterplan. The design will allow IWM to display its collection more effectively by bringing clarity to the existing buildings, enlarging the galleries and offering visitors a better understanding of the Museum and its collection."

For further information

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