

Committee: Community and Children's Services	Dated: 12/10/2018
Subject: Golden Lane Estate – new flats at Great Arthur House and relocation of estate staff	Public
Report of: Andrew Carter, Director of Community and Children's Services	For Information
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Summary

This report updates Members on issues raised regarding two applications considered by the Planning and Transportation Committee on 11 September 2018. These relate to a proposal to convert the ground floor of Great Arthur House into flats, and to relocate the displaced estate staff to the administration office in the newly refurbished Golden Lane Community Centre (GLCC).

The report outlines the further consultation that will take place with residents on these issues.

Recommendation

Members are asked to note the report.

Main Report

Background

1. Proposals to convert the ground floor of Great Arthur House into three flats for social rent have been included in the Housing Delivery Programme since 2015. The need for more social housing is well documented and this location provides an opportunity to build ground floor, wheelchair-accessible accommodation. This is particularly important as the City has no other flats of this nature in the Square Mile.
2. In December 2015, Members of the Community and Children's Services' Committee rejected a proposal to consider the reconfiguration and refurbishment of the GLCC in order to accommodate City of London Community Education

Centre (COLCEC), the Estate Office and the community hall, and to share the office and meeting facilities with resident groups. The reason for this was that Members at the time wanted officers to explore the possibility of a larger community facility to serve both the Golden Lane and the Barbican Estates.

3. Following further work by officers and Members, the proposal was subsequently agreed by Members of the Community and Children's Services Committee at its meeting on 8 April 2016.
4. The ground floor of Great Arthur House is currently occupied by the estate office, which needs to be moved to make way for the flats. The City is highly unusual in having maintained local offices on its estates – most social landlords have closed these in favour of area and central offices. So there is no requirement to maintain an estate office. However, the City's estate offices are much-valued by residents, and particularly the social tenants who make most use of them, and the Housing Service is committed to finding ways of retaining them where possible.
5. In 2015, the tenants running the GLCC handed the building back to the City as it was no longer financially viable for them. GLCC is owned by the City's Housing Revenue Account (HRA) and is the responsibility of the Housing Service. It was badly in need of refurbishment, and this was seen as an opportunity to relocate the resident-facing element of the estate office and also to provide adequate staffing presence for the Centre. A sum of £125,000 was allocated from the HRA to create an office in the centre to accommodate the Centre Manager and a small number of estate staff.
6. In 2015, the first plans for the refurbishment of the Centre, including the creation of an estate office in part of the building, were presented to residents.
7. The initial response was that residents were not opposed to the locating of staff in the building. However, there was concern that proposals to site the office on the lower floor would not give the level of accessibility needed. This reflected learning from Artizan Street Library and Community Centre, where locating estate staff in an upper floor office had not been successful. Therefore, architects were asked to relocate the planned office to a disused storage area on the ground floor of GLCC.
8. A Joint Officer/Resident Steering Group was set up to refine plans for the refurbishment project. A number of compromises were reached, and the group was generally felt to be a very successful model for collaborative working. However, one area where agreement could not be reached was the plan to locate estate staff in the building. The residents on the Steering Group were opposed to this and, over time, a number of other residents also supported this opposition.
9. The centre refurbishment project commenced and was completed in May 2018. In the meantime, plans were drawn up for the proposed new flats.
10. Before the centre was handed over by the contractor, Housing officers were made aware of an error in the refurbishment planning application. The application stated that there were no plans to move the estate office into the centre. This was

incorrect, as evidenced by continual consultation with residents and with the Steering Group on this matter over the previous two years. However, having been informed about the error, Housing officers postponed plans for estate staff to move into the centre and, in consultation with Planning colleagues, submitted an application to correct the error.

11. At its meeting on 11 September 2018, the City's Planning and Transportation Committee considered two planning applications from the Department of Community and Children's Services. These were:

- To change the use of the Community Centre to enable estate staff to be located in the office and to use kitchen and toilet facilities
- To convert the ground floor of Great Arthur House into three flats.

12. There were 33 written objections to the first application and 17 written objections to the second application. Objectors spoke at the Committee meeting and Members discussed a number of issues. The two applications were approved, subject to a condition being imposed on the first with respect to access for disabled people. However, Members were concerned about some of the issues raised and the level of objections and asked for these to be addressed in a paper to Community and Children's Services Committee.

Great Arthur House flats

13. During the Planning and Transportation Committee meeting on 11 September, an issue was raised by an objector regarding the ceiling level of part of one proposed flat. This issue had not been previously identified by the architects and officers, or raised by objectors.

14. Having looked into this matter, while it is correct that the ceiling level in one room, currently used as a store for the cleaning cradle, is lower than the rest of the ceilings, this does not prevent the proposed redevelopment from creating new flats at the base of Great Arthur House. We are currently carrying out further surveys to assess the works and amendments that may be necessary to overcome the difference in ceiling height.

Relocation of Estate Staff

15. A number of issues were raised with regard to the proposal to move estate staff into GLCC. Many of these focused on the perceived inadequacy of the office space and reception area. Objectors raised concerns that the presence of estate staff would be incompatible with the use of the centre as a community facility and that there would be a concern with residents coming in with private issues that could be overheard by community centre users.

16. The size of the office space has been confirmed by Health and Safety assessors as being appropriate for the small number of staff intended to be based there. Issues around the flow of people in the reception area can be addressed with

careful management. Most visitors to the Estate Office are bringing routine, non-private matters. Those wishing to discuss a private matter can use the private interview room, or can make an appointment for a home visit. Therefore, officers do not find these concerns insurmountable.

17. However, there were more serious concerns raised about the size of the private interview room. Although this meets regulations and the doors are wide enough to accommodate a wheelchair, there is insufficient space to fully manoeuvre a wheelchair. Therefore, a planning condition is to be imposed. The draft wording of the condition, to be agreed with the Chairman and Deputy Chairman of Planning and Transportation Committee, is as follows:

Notwithstanding the details of the office layout shown on drawing 2325_PL_109_2, the use of the sui generis office area shall not commence until details of an interview room have been submitted to and approved by the Local Planning Authority that meet the requirements of Local Plan policy DM10.8 which shall be constructed prior to first occupation in accordance with the approved drawings and maintained thereafter whilst the use is in operation.

REASON: To ensure that the development will be accessible for people with disabilities in accordance with the following policy of the Local Plan: DM10.8.

Proposed Resident Consultation

18. In light of the opposition to the proposal to move estate staff into GLCC, and concerns raised about the flats, Members of your Committee have asked officers to carry out further consultation with residents.

19. The consultation will explore:

- residents' ideas for the flats
- a proposal to set one flat aside as an extra-care facility for City residents leaving hospital but temporarily unable to return home
- possible alternative locations for the estate staff, costs, the implications for the Community Centre and the likely impact on residents
- how residents' concerns can be addressed if the estate staff do move into the Community Centre.

20. A Ward Member has proposed that the consultation take the form of an open workshop in the Community Centre, facilitated by an external organisation.

21. City tenants are less likely to attend open events, and some have expressed a lack of confidence about participating in activities where leaseholders are significantly represented. Therefore, the plan is to hold a separate, independently facilitated event exclusively for social tenants where they can be encouraged to express their views.

22. These events are planned for late October/early November. After this, a paper will be submitted to your Committee so that Members can consider the feedback.

Corporate & Strategic Implications

23. The plans to build new flats and to relocate the estate office support the Corporate aim to contribute to a flourishing society.

Implications

24. There are financial implications for the Community Centre if the estate staff are not based there, as the £125,000 contributed by the HRA for this purpose would have to be repaid. There are also implications for income, as the HRA would make a contribution to the running costs of the centre if staff are based there. These implications will have to be explored as part of the consultation process.
25. There would also be financial costs involved in finding an alternative location for staff, other than the Barbican Estate Office. However, these would be offset by the £125,000 which would need to be repaid from the Community Centre budget. Any shortfall would likely be recoverable from residents.
26. There are further implications for the running of the Community Centre if estate staff are not based there, as the City's model for doing this relies on the presence of estate staff in the building (see *Golden Lane Community Centre Management* – paper to Housing Management and Almshouses Sub-committee, 12 February 2018). Solutions will also be explored with residents as part of the consultation.

Conclusion

27. In view of the issues raised regarding the planned flats at the base of Great Arthur House and the relocation of the estate staff, further consultation with residents of Golden Lane Estate on these matters is planned.

Appendices

- None

Background Papers

- *Gateway 1 Project Proposal: Phase I, Golden Lane Community Hall and Estate Office base of Great Arthur House.* Paper to Community and Children's Services Committee, 11 December 2015
- *Potential venues for the initial relocation of Adult Skills and Education Services.* Paper to Community and Children's Services Committee, 8 April 2016
- *Golden Lane Community Centre and Estate Office situated at the base of Great Arthur House – Gateway 3/4 (Outline Options Appraisal).* Paper to Community and Children's Services Committee, 17 February 2017
- *Golden Lane Community Centre, Gateway 5 – Authority to Start Work.* Paper to Community and Children's Services Committee, 14 July 2017

- *Management of Golden Lane Community Centre*. Paper to Housing Management and Almshouses Sub-committee, 12 February 2018
- *Minutes of the Planning and Transportation Committee, 11 September 2018*

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