

The Barbican at Fifty: A Blueprint for the next Fifty Years

Discussion paper on formulating a pro-active improvement strategy for the Barbican.

The Barbican Estate is a much admired work of architecture and a great place to live. How do we ensure that it is still flourishing in fifty years' time?

The "City Plan 2036" acknowledges the need to protect and enhance the Barbican Estate:

S11 "Conserving and enhancing heritage assets to ensure that the City's townscapes and heritage can be enjoyed for their contribution to quality of life and wellbeing;"

S23 "identifying and meeting residents' needs in the north of the City, including the protection and enhancement of residential amenity, community facilities and open space;"

The Barbican was designed to environmental standards of the fifties and sixties. For example, most of the terrace blocks lack double glazing, mandated in new builds today. It is not Carbon neutral and this will not change without a reappraisal of our current arrangements for maintaining the estate.

The Barbican Residents' Lease is concerned with maintenance of the fabric of the estate, to be paid for by the residents through a service charge, which is monitored by a Residents' Consultation Committee (RCC). Improvements to the estate are the responsibility of and paid for by the City of London (CoL) as Landlord and as such largely sit outside the remit of the RCC. Consequently, there is little structured dialogue between residents and the CoL regarding improvements to the estate.

In fact, opportunities to make improvements are being missed. Examples include the current reroofing of the terrace blocks which did not include improvements in insulation, the replacement of cold water tanks being like for like without including measures to prevent legionnaire's disease, and recent works on the underfloor heating which have largely been restricted to maintaining the status quo and have not considered reduction in energy consumption. We believe that significant improvements to the estate could have been made at minimum cost.

Consequently, there is an imperative, holistically to review maintenance and improvement of the estate. To ensure its appeal to residents and the value of a key CoL asset will not decline over time to the point where the Barbican ceases to be pre-eminent amongst iconic housing in Europe.

We want the RCC propose to the BRC that a working group be set up, to involve the City Solicitor to establish how the constraints on expenditure imposed by the current leases might be overcome with the aim of enabling a pro-active mechanism for improvements to be established. This could build on the experience and good working relationship between residents and the CoL in the RCC.

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