

<b>Committee(s):</b>	<b>Date(s):</b>
Open Spaces, City Gardens & West Ham Park	3rd December 2012
<b>Subject:</b> Proposals concerning Rennie Garden, London Borough of Southwark	<b>Public</b>
<b>Report of:</b> Director of Open Spaces	<b>For Information</b>
<b>Ward:</b>	
<p style="text-align: center;"><b><u>Summary</u></b></p> <p>Rennie Garden is part of the Bridge House Estates and maintained by City Gardens with costs recharged to that fund. The City has been approached by Carlyle Investment Management LLC, who is proposing a major development scheme either side of the southern approach to Blackfriars Bridge circa 1.4million ft<sup>2</sup> to provide a mixed commercial and residential scheme.</p> <p>The scheme directly adjoins Rennie Garden and Carlyle is wishing to redesign the garden to improve the overall layout and access, particularly to the river side walk on the south side of the River Thames, and the new southern entrance of Blackfriars Station.</p> <p>Rennie Garden would possibly benefit from works to renew its hard and soft landscaping, which are presently looking somewhat tired. Part of the developer's proposals include removal of two of the plane trees, thus remodelling could deliver a new and more vibrant open space, beneficial to all.</p> <p>Discussions with the developer are on-going, potentially with a view to bringing forward a suitable proposal and recommendation for your subsequent consideration.</p> <p><b>Recommendation</b></p> <p>I recommend that this report is noted.</p>	

## **Main Report**

### **Background**

1. Rennie Garden in the London Borough of Southwark, is part of the Bridge House Estates and maintained by City Gardens with costs recharged to that fund. The land was acquired by the City under the provision of the Blackfriars Bridge Act 1756 and preserved as public space under the London Chatham and Dover Railway (Additional Powers) Act 1862.

### **Current Position**

2. The Garden is laid out as a paved area containing nine plane trees with some under-planting and benches. The last major refurbishment of the Garden took place in 1997 with the introduction of York stone paving.
3. Rennie Garden provides an important link between the Blackfriars Bridge Road level and the lower river side walk via a steep flight of stairs at its northern end.
4. The plane trees are mature and somewhat close, forming a dense mass of foliage alongside the south east of Blackfriars Bridge and a significant feature within the townscape. However, their proximity to each other and Ludgate House directly to the east of the Garden, is constraining their growth.
5. Carlyle Investment Management LLC (developer) has approached the City wishing to undertake landscaping and remodelling works to the Garden. Following initial discussions about the proposals that the developer submitted, the layout details were revised and re-submitted.
6. Its development on the eastern side of Blackfriars Road is to be set back approximately 10m from the Garden, greatly enlarging the public area and providing an opportunity to increase the perceived scale of the garden, and allowing space for the natural development of the tree crowns.
7. The developer is seeking improved access to the river side walk by remodelling the flight of stairs and upgrading the materials and finishes. A pedestrian lift is also being contemplated. The changes would involve the loss of the two plane trees currently at either side of the existing steps.
8. Tree replacement, redesigned under-planting beds, high quality materials, and new seating and lighting would all help to enhance the public areas.
9. However, discussions in relation to the revised layout details are on-going and remain subject to your approval. There is merit in discussing possible works to Rennie Garden but presently the proposals are not concluded, thus

it is not yet possible to make any recommendations, although it is hoped to conclude details shortly and that a further report will be submitted for your consideration in due course.

10. A Landscape Strategy has been submitted by the Developer and is included as Appendix 1.

### **Corporate & Strategic Implications**

11. The issues dealt with in this report support three of the City Together themes for a City which:

- is competitive and supports opportunity;
- supports our communities; and
- protects, promotes and enhances our environment.

### **Financial and Risk Implications**

12. Currently there no financial implications to be considered, but will need to be included, should proposals be put forwarded for subsequent consideration and approval.

### **Legal Implications**

13. Section 52 of the London Chatham and Dover Railway (Additional Powers) Act 1862 provides that Rennie Garden “...*shall be preserved for ever for the use of the public an open space free from buildings: provided, that nothing...shall prevent the raising of the said ground to the level of the approach to the present or any future road bridge at Blackfriars.*”

### **Property Implications**

14. Provided that the developer’s works proposals are acceptable in principle to the City in relation to its ownership and provision and maintenance of public open space at Rennie Garden, the City should seek high quality improvements that do not increase its maintenance burden.

### **Conclusion**

15. The developer of the adjacent property proposes to make alterations to Rennie Garden with the intention of improving access to buildings on their site. The proposals impact on the northern access to the Riverside in particular with changes to the steps resulting in the loss of two trees and the planting of one tree.
16. Members are asked to note the proposals and officers will continue to engage with the developer to conclude details and submit a further report for your consideration in due course.

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## Appendix 1

### Rennie Garden Landscape Report

*By Townshend Landscape Architects on behalf of The Carlyle Group.*