Rooms of our Own
Proposal for St James Street site E17 7PJ
A new community centre

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Prepared by
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1. Introduction

This report summarizes the briefing process for RooO St James community facility. The report will not go into detailed brief for the housing on the upper floors, as this will in part depend on the various options and the requirements of our development partner. It is probable that the first floor will be housing for older women with a communal area and this might form a custom-build component that will allow London Borough of Waltham Forest to meet its obligations under the new legislation.

- The Briefing report is a result of consultation with Directors of Rooms of our Own various public consultation events with a number of community groups, in the London borough of Waltham Forest but also a wider area of London. From this consultation a list of “Expressions of interest” (EOI) has been created and this has influenced the brief.
- Area recommendations and unit numbers in this report were calculated as part of a self financing program, where the selling of the flats will provide the required funding for the whole building including the community centre.
- It is presumed that once the building is built, income from the leasing of spaces will pay for the maintenance and upkeep of the building.
- This report is calculated on the premise that the land is transferred under the terms of the Localism Act by the local authority on a basis agreed the outset of the project, the benefit being the community facilities which will enhance the local area. The capital receipt will be provided on project completion as per original discussions with LBWF Asset Management.
This report will make recommendations based on wide consultation with 2nd tier community organizations, professionals in the various fields and a wide range of potential users and supporters.

Contributors include:

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- The Directors of Rooms of our Own   Wendy Davis, Nabila Pathan, Gaynor Pates, Karen Flint and Franki Hackett
- Rooms of our Own Advisors   Jennette Arnold AM  Professor Jeryl Whitelock, Sharon Matthews  Sylvie Pierce
- Shared Enterprise   Liz Mackie
- Envoy Partnership   Oliver Kempton
- Community Land Trusts   Stephen Hill
- GLA   Owain Roberts
- LBWF   Gordon Glenday  Nick Powell  Dianne Andrews  Paul Venn
- Igloo
- Thornsett Group
- Peabody
- Housing for Women
- Women’s Resource Centre
- The Mill
- Waltham Forest Women’s Network
2. Summary

This report documents the Brief for the architecture and some landscaping scope of works for the facility of the RooO project.

The report contains: complete list of space types and areas, adjacency diagrams, and other organizational recommendations. It also documents assumptions about use of each facility, and provides recommendations for accessibility.

The report also contains a description of the requirements for disabled parking; drop off area and landscape and or hardscape architecture associated with the facility.

Requirement for bike and buggy parking, as well as any enclosed outdoor areas, on ground floor or roofs will be indicated on the master plan.

Any special treatment to pavement outside building or areas nominated community project or local artist installation should be marked on master plan. The latter would be site specific.

It is assumed that these recommendations will be used in the final design process for the project. It is recommended that the list of spaces be considered as a fixed requirement of the final project (pending final cost assessments), while the layout and adjacency diagrams should be seen as guidelines, not necessarily as a strict mandate.

The recommended program areas in this report are generally expressed in net metre square. These areas identify the size of the actual rooms that are to be occupied in the building. The list of spaces, therefore, does not include non-occupied areas such as corridors, toilet rooms, stairs and lift shafts, electrical and mechanical rooms, wall thicknesses, etc. In order to determine the overall area of the project (gross meter square) we have customarily used an efficiency factor of 75% (gross area x .75 = net area).

The new centre and housing will be built to Passivhaus standards, which is a fabric first approach to heating standards.

“A Passivhaus is a building, for which thermal comfort can be achieved solely by post-heating or post-cooling of the fresh air mass, which is required to achieve sufficient indoor air quality conditions – without the need for additional recirculation of air.”

Passive Houses allow for space heating and cooling related energy savings of up to 90% compared with typical building stock and over 75% compared to average new builds.
3.1 Project Overview

Rooms of our Own is an exciting new social enterprise planning to build a beautiful, green and fully accessible women’s centre with a range of housing based around the site in St James St, Walthamstow. This model for an intentional community would remain the same in any inner city site.

There will be a café open to all, hot-desking, meeting rooms, a crèche, gallery space, performance space, spaces for women’s charities and organisations as well as support for women’s businesses. It is also intended to have a garden on the roof with opportunities for growing food as well as recreation.

The idea is to move away from the grant-funded models of the past, and to construct housing to fund the centre. Once the project is built it should be financially self-sustaining and we hope that the model will be copied across London and even the UK.

The current model shows additional function rooms on the roof that can be hired by the community and catered for privately or by the café below.

A residents garden and a Growing Community project which could supply some of the Café’s needs are also indicated on the roof plan.

The building will combine a range of spaces that have been grouped together to promote sharing and provide synergies among the various uses.
The brief includes the following components for the Centre:

**Public areas:**
- Public Café including kitchen: 90sqm
- Centre office and reception: 40sqm
- Print office: 20sqm
- Toilets
- Roof top function rooms / including toilets: 170sqm
- Community gardens
- Growing communities

**Community user’s areas:**
- Small meeting rooms to include some hot desking: 100sqm
- Community activities (performance, yoga etc): 60sqm
- Crèche: 60sqm
- Hot Desking area for Crèche users: 25sqm
- Gallery along corridor
- Toilets

**Letable women’s organization’s areas**
- Charity & business meetings - function room: 40sqm
- Organizations premises: 100sqm
- Toilets

The program includes the following components for the housing,
Some of which would be for single older women moving into Rooms of our Own This would release larger properties in the area for larger families.

- Four bedroom flat- x 4: 400 sqm
- Three bedroom flats - x 8: 624 gsm
- Two bedroom flats - x 12: 878 gsm
- One bedroom flats - x 21: 1127gsm
**Total: 45 units** 3029gsm

- Meeting room for elderly on first floor: 24 gsm
- Function rooms on roof: 164 gsm
- Storage unit on roof: 14 gsm

**Total for sale or rent on upper levels:** 3231gsm

Please note this does not include circulation areas

The overall size of the facility on the ground floor is 560sqm net which presuming this is 0.75% of the final building equals 746sqm gross.
Total net area does not including toilets, circulation and wall thickness.
To determine the amount of toilets required we would need to determine the number of people using the building
3.2 Building organization

This report contains no specific recommendations about overall building organization, insofar as there is a good deal of flexibility in this regard. There are some recommendations about the relative location of functions in what is imagined to be a six storey building, as well as some recommendations about desired adjacencies.

As the design of the building depends on the site and local planning restrictions the numbers of housing units in this report is specific to this site. The number of units for sale and rent is based on current local resale market value in order to provide enough income to build the building including the community centre. The building will be spread across six floors with the possibility of functions rooms and community gardens on the roof level.

The model for St James Street would have the ground floor dedicated to three user groups;
- The Public area which would include a Café with some outside space located on the main road, a reception to the center, shared resources area and a unit for rental, possibly printers.
- The community area: would include communal activity space which could be used for conferences, performances, exercise classes amongst others, hot-desking areas with business units, some of which would be rentable and some subsidized, a Crèche' with its own outside area and its own hot-desking area.
- The Private women's organizations area:
  This would include letable offices and meeting rooms

The upper floors of the building will accommodate the housing, which will fund the building of the project.
- The first floor will be designed to full wheelchair accessible standards and will be for older single women. There will be a communal area associated with this floor.

There will be a roof garden to be used by residents and users of the community center; organization is yet to be determined but part of the area will be used for growing food.

Top roof suggested to be used as a community garden for the buildings tenants with a separate area to be use for growing community project.
- Two big function rooms, which would generate income. There has been interest in the community for a function room for weddings, parties and special events. These rooms may have use of the roof gardens and could source provisions from the café on the ground floor.
- These function rooms could be easily converted into penthouses for sale.
In general, the recommendations are as follows:

Siting -
The building needs to be in an area, which has good public transport links and where the street is overlooked and feels safe for women.

ZONE ONE – Public use, access to all

Cafe –
To have direct access from St James Street. Café to open onto enclosed outdoor area. Café proposed to be in a controlled environment with glazed and unglazed walls around it so that it can be secured at a certain hour. Café may house exhibition area as gallery space. Café to have its own kitchen area. Café will be rented out commercially. In EOI document there are references to a couple of parties who would be interested in using the café space and possibly kitchen for occasional hire.

Centre office- and reception
Recommended to be at front of building on St James Street, with easy access for deliveries to have it's own kitchenette.

Print office- rentable space
To be near the Centre office and to be able to accept and send out deliveries. (From EOI)

ZONE TWO – Community users
No strong location recommendation. Would need to have controlled access.

The use of this zone will be targeted mainly at individual women and women’s groups. However men will normally also be allowed unless there is a specific Women’s event booked using the entire ground floor. This zone will contain the hot-desking area and the crèche where women will be able to work in peace for a few hours each day. There will also be meeting rooms for hire to the general public unless there is a Women’s event taking place. There will be office space for rent to businesses and charities. There will be a multi-use space that can be divided if necessary to be used for conferences, performance, yoga and fitness classes and other activities as required by users. This area will need its own kitchenette and toilets, including children’s toilets and nappy changing associated with the crèche provision.
A multi use space
Should be able to be used as one big space or to be divided into two separate areas. It will need to accommodate a performance area so some thought should be given to storage of seating and different user group’s belongings. It is to have its own kitchenette.
Current EOI are showing interest to use the space for activities such as Yoga classes, fitness classes, exercise and pampering for older women
This report is not presuming performances for the general public will be taking place in the above-mentioned area. Hence no toilet allocation made for audience numbers.

Meeting rooms and hot-desking
Current expressions of interest to Rooms of our Own include over 14 for units of around 20sqm each on a permanent basis for small meeting rooms, which will be rented out commercially and at times subsidized. Mainly used by women but some times not.
Current EOI are showing over 14 EOI for units of around 20sqm each on a permanent base. 3 EOI have been for hot-desking.
The two above spaces could share toilet facilities.

Crèche and hot-desking
Includes kitchenette, secure access, designated toilets and possibly a buggy storage area. This area should over look the ‘landscaped out door area’ but will also require a small-secured dedicated outdoor area for a sand pit and a splash pond.
It will have its own designated hot-desking area.

ZONE THREE – Private women’s organizations
This area will include the offices of organizations working with vulnerable women who need to be assured that they will not be in a waiting area with men, and that they will not be required to speak to a male professional.
There will be a shared area where these organizations can hold workshops or social and supportive gatherings and activities. This zone will need its own kitchenette and toilets. This zone will also be available to groups who want to rent out women-only space for religious, cultural, political or other reasons.

Secure outdoor area
To have direct access from Café and Gallery display, possible access from meeting rooms, no direct access from Crèche
External works
Secure Bicycle parking for residents and center users
Public seating
Public, community art display inside and outside the building
Drop off area
Disabled parking
Street landscape and hardscape, including replanting of existing trees and new trees

3.3 Accessibility requirements

It is the recommendation of this report that the design of the community center and housing should conform at a minimum to the guidelines set in the The Building Regulations 2010 Access to and use of buildings, approved document M.
The first floor should comply with Waltham Forest’s Housing Access Guidelines.

This recommendation impacts the design of many building components, but most significantly requires the inclusion of two elevators to provide secure access to the upper floors of the building.

3.4 Brief

Net square meter versus gross square meter

Generally speaking, the area in the Brief is documented in the form of net square meter (nsm). This is the area of the actual functional rooms themselves – offices, seminar rooms, etc. Not included in these room area totals are internal corridors, toilet rooms, stairways, mechanical and electrical rooms, wall thickness, elevator shafts, duct shafts, etc. – all of the other space that makes up the overall area of the finished building. When these areas are included this is expressed as ‘gsm’ rather than sqm.

Area of building on ground floor
Total net square meter =560
Total gross 560 / 0.75% =746gsm
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<th>Net area sqm</th>
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