

Rooms of our Own  
On St James Street E17 7PJ  
A new community centre

February 2015  
Prepared by  
Anne Thorne Architects



3D view of proposed building from St James's Street

## 1. Introduction

This report summarizes the briefing process for Rooms of our Own community facility.

The report will not go into the 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, online and paper based surveys. 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 given by the local authority on a basis agreed at the outset of the project in conformity with the provisions of the Localism Act; the benefit being the community facilities which will enhance the local area. It is assumed that payment will be made by RooO on completion, not upfront.
- This report will make recommendations based on wide consultation with 2<sup>nd</sup> tier community organizations, professionals in the various fields and a wide range of potential users and supporters.

**Contributors include:**

- Anne Thorne Architects LLP Anne Thorne and Yael Gordon-Wide
- 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 and Sylvie Pierce
- Shared Enterprise Liz Mackie
- Envoy Partnership Oliver Kempton
- Community Land Trusts Stephen Hill, Catherine Harrington
- GLA Owain Roberts
- LBWF Officers Gordon Glenday, Nick Powell, Dianne Andrews, Paul Venn, Clem Smith
- Igloo Chris Brown
- Thornsett Group Bernadette Cunningham
- Peabody - CBHA
- Housing for Women Jakki Moxham
- Women's Resource Centre Viv Hayes
- The Mill
- Waltham Forest Women's Network
- OBJECT
- UK Feminista
- Feminist Library
- Tindlemanor

## 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 metre square) we have customarily used an efficiency factor of 75% (gross area x .75 = net area).

The new center 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 modular 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 room/ including toilets	170sqm
Community gardens	
Growing communities	

#### **Community users' 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
Organisation's 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
<b>Total: 45 units</b>	<b>3029gsm</b>

Meeting room for elderly on first floor	24 gsm
Function rooms on roof	164 gsm
Storage unit on roof	14 gsm
<b>Total for sale or rent on upper levels:</b>	<b>3231gsm</b>
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;

Zone 1 The Public area which would include a Café with some outside space located on the main road, a reception to the centre, shared resources area and a unit for rental, possibly printers.

Zone 2 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.

Zone 3 The Private women's organisations area:

This would include lettable 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 centre; organisation 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 a food-growing community project. Two big function rooms are planned 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 should this be more financially viable.

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. It is to have a frontage to the main 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 its 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 groups ' belongings. It is to have its own kitchenette.

Current EOIs are showing interest to use the space for activities such as Yoga classes, fitness classes, exercise and pampering for older women

#### **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 sometimes not.

Current EOIs are showing over 14 EOIs for units of around 20sqm each on a permanent base. 3 EOIs 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 overlook the 'landscaped outdoor 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.

#### Zone Four- Mixed use

##### **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 centre 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 centre 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 sq. metre versus gross sq. metre

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

Area Brief	Net area sqm
1. Café	
1.1 Kitchen area	20
1.2 Internal seating area	70
1.3 Toilets	0
1.4 Outdoor seating	0
1.5 Gallery	0
subtotal	90
2. Office	
2.1 Centre office	20
2.2 Centre reception	10
2.3 Centre storage	5
2.4 Print or other lettable office	20
2.5 Kitchenette	5
2.6 Toilets	0
subtotal	60
3. Community user premises	
3.1 Individual units and hot-desking	95
3.2 Multipurpose use inc storage	60
3.3 Toilets	0
3.4 Kitchenette	5

3.5 Community and residents	
secure bicycle storage	20
subtotal	180
4. Private women's organizations	
4.1 Business/ Organization's premises	95
4.2 Meeting space	40
4.3 Toilets	0
4.4 Kitchenette	5
4.5 Storage	5
subtotal	145
5. Hot-desking & Crèche	
5.1 Hot-desking	25
5.2 Crèche	50
5.3 Toilets	0
5.4 Kitchenette	5
5.5 Storage	5
subtotal	85
Total	560





