

**Design, Access and Impact Statement**

**Bethnal Green Museum Gardens Toilet Site Project**

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## 1.0 Design Statement

### 2.0 Project Brief

The Architects of London Borough of Tower Hamlets (LBTH) Building and Technical Services have been appointed by LBTH Parks and Play to propose a scheme that looks to convert the existing toilet block into a café whilst also providing public toilet facilities.

The proposal is intended to address the long standing redundancy of the site and existing building, whilst also providing a valuable community facility in a prime position in the heart of Bethnal Green.

The project looks to refurbish the existing building, maintaining its salvageable characteristics and injecting a new lease of life into the building and its immediate context. The scheme looks to sensitively regenerate the local area by introducing a much more open feel to the building by using glass through transparency and well considered openings. The building would be able to be closed and secured either with the park opening and closing times or independently.

### 3.0 Use and History

The new design incorporates the following:

- New internal café with outside space to the West and North as well as a gated roof terrace
- Public toilet facility providing two gents urinals, two gents cubicles and wash hand basins; two female cubicles and wash hand basins plus an accessible toilet

The toilet block building located on the site has been redundant for circa 15 years. LBTH have explored numerous options since closure to redevelop the building and site but to date there have been no viable options carried forward. The most recent scheme looked to demolish the building and introduce a bicycle parking facility on the site. The scheme was aborted by the client due to a mixed reception to the proposals as well as political influence. The key element of the current proposals is looking at addressing an obvious requirement for the building and site's regeneration by providing a robust and sustainable solution. The scheme also provides a much needed public toilet facility in the immediate locality – ironically, the former use of the building.

As noted, the scheme also looks to generally address the existing derelict, abused and unusable site that the toilet block currently is situated. The site is notorious for misuse by drug users and members of the public using the confined and concealed spaces the building creates for urinating. As the scheme proposes to make the building usable again, this will change the public's perception of the building as well as have users present daily to provide indirect surveillance. When closed, the building will be able to be completely secured by use of roller concealed shutters to doors and windows.

### 4.0 Amount

The building has a GEA of 93m<sup>2</sup> and the site as a whole totals 158m<sup>2</sup> (Refer to **PA-22**).

## 5.0 Layout

The proposal intends to contribute positively to the regeneration and changing face of the Bethnal Green area. The new facility would have a park entrance and also a street entrance utilising the existing but currently unused gates immediately adjacent to the North entrance to Bethnal Green Underground Station. The kiosk currently adjacent to the gates which to note is on Transport for London land, would be offered a chance of taking on the tenancy of the new café as inevitably the commercial outlet would be affected by the opening of the new facility.

The designs concentrate on a public face of the building being created by use of façade transparency in combination with the extensive proposed use of external areas to the north and west of the building plus the roof terrace area.

Internally, the Cambridge Heath Road entrance to the café and public toilets would be shared to ensure that the toilets are managed and under surveillance, endeavouring to minimise chances of misuse. The café will have an open counter to offer takeaway and sit in services/facilities. The staff areas include kitchen area and storage. For the facilities offered, deliveries would be relatively minimal in size and frequency and would therefore come through the main entrance.

## 6.0 Scale

As the existing building is being retained, the scale of the building will be largely un-changed. The only difference in perceived scale will be the proposed use of the roof space though this will have minimal impact on its surroundings.

## 7.0 Landscaping

It is proposed that the trees present on the site will be retained (refer to **PA-22**) and will form part of the proposals. Areas to the North and East of the building will have carefully considered tarmac hard-standing introduced to provide areas for external seating and access to the roof terrace. Other than these areas, vegetation will be retained or, where areas are affected by construction works, replaced with like for like planting.

## 8.0 Appearance

The building will retain the brick and stonework already present in the fabric of the building with all windows, openings and roof being replaced. Key and carefully composed new openings will be created to enable the building, when open, to provide a transparency to the building to animate the façade and public appearance whilst also attracting custom from the park and Cambridge Heath Road.

The windows and doors will be powder coated aluminium in a charcoal grey colour. The railings introduced to the external stairwell and rooftop balustrade would be designed to compliment those surrounding the site. Where railings are being modified, they will match existing railings (shown in fig a) and painted black.



fig a.

The area designated for public toilets would use the existing high level windows for ventilation and retain the privacy required. Sanitary ware would be robust, stainless steel type that would be maintained by the café facility to ensure that the areas are not misused and also maintained.

## 9.0 Access Statement

The site being located in the heart of the Bethnal Green area is surrounded by several public facilities and the position provides a natural hub for community use. The site is easily accessible via several bus routes along Bethnal Green Road, Roman Road and Cambridge Heath Road as well as the adjacent Bethnal Green underground station.

The design responds to the growing needs of the local community by offering an easily accessible facility which aims to enhance the local environment and has the added intention of creating a destination within the park to encourage use of the Bethnal Green museum gardens area and locality.

It should also be noted that the site is also approximately 100m north of the start/end of the Sustrans Connect 2 cycle route running from Bethnal Green Gardens to Victoria Park, which is a key strategic east-west cycling link in the Borough.

## 10.0 Vehicular and Transport Links

As noted above, the site is well located with numerous transport links in easy distance – particularly for cyclists.

During the short construction period, the park has ample area to provide a small enclosed contractor's compound. Access to the site for construction vehicles is easily achievable though strategies would need careful consideration and management to allow for separation from the public.

## 11.0 Inclusive Access

The proposals will provide level access to the building, fully compliant with DDA requirements on the ground floor. Regarding the rooftop terrace, to note, these facilities are duplicated elsewhere in the building.

## 12.0 Security

The building will be opened, most likely, with park opening and closing times and both the café and public toilet facilities being maintained by the café staff. When not in use the gates to the site will be locked and all openings to the building i.e. doors and windows, covered with roller shutters concealed in the lintels. Site specific CCTV will be installed to survey the area to compliment the already existing CCTV camera already mounted on the central reservation of Cambridge Heath Road.

## 13.0 Consultation

Through the design process there has been extensive consultation with LBTH Parks and Play to determine the best use and design of the building. The project also draws off the results of previous consultation carried out with LBTH Public Realm (Transport and Highways section), LBTH Community Safety and Operations (concerning CCTV in particular), local area groups including 'Friends of Bethnal Green' as well as LBTH Conservation and Planning.

## 14.0 Impact Statement

The biggest impact on the local area as a result of the scheme will be the regeneration of the building and site. This will increase activity in the locality by creating a destination for users – with target markets for the café being commuters, park users and residents plus visitors to and from the Bethnal Green area.

Of particular consideration is the adjacent St John's Church of Bethnal Green. The scheme intends to improve the immediate context to the church as well as all other adjacent land uses by introducing an animated and ultimately useful community and area resource. The scheme will also open up new views of the Church from the rooftop area. The use of the site will also create flexibility for the future if for any reason the café enterprise is changed.

## 14.1 Historic Parks listing

To confirm, the site is part of Bethnal Green Museum Gardens which is on the English Heritage Register of Historic Parks and Gardens and as a result, needs consideration with regard to the application.