

WDCO Board

July 2024

1. Introduction

This paper gives an update on the various ground floor/non residential pieces of work at Woodberry Down. It is proposed that this workstream will be collectively referred to as the placemaking strategy as it incorporates all non residential uses and initiatives on the estate including commercial, community and cultural space and initiatives.

2. Strategy work completed to date and next steps

2.1 Ground Floor Strategy (Social Life and CF Commercial)

In 2023 Social Life and CF Commercial were appointed to prepare a ground floor strategy for Woodberry Down. The strategy was separated into a commercial brief and a social infrastructure brief, and comprises three stages including a review of the existing facilities, and demographic analysis; a demand assessment for both community and commercial space; and, bringing this information together to create a strategy and implementation plan.

Stage 1 and Stage 2 are now complete. Stage 1 findings relating to community space and infrastructure indicate many positives about Woodberry Down, in particular activities for young people and children, and open spaces. However the demand assessment assessment (Stage 2) shows a need for more/more affordable community spaces, additional play space and additional educational/study spaces. The research also showed a need for nursery space.

Stage 1 findings stated that rent collection on existing commercial units is below average, indicating occupiers are not thriving. The demand assessment provided for the commercial spaces was based on demographic analysis and key trends. Recommendations include increasing the range and number of food and beverage (F&B) uses, ensuring a range of income groups are considered, and that nursery or health facilities/practitioners could complement the existing offer and provide 'overlap' of community/commercial functions.

The final stage (Stage 3) is to formulate a strategy and implementation plan for coordinating community and commercial space and uses into the future. A workshop with Social Life to review the findings and discuss Stage 3, is being planned.

The overarching objective for Stage 3 is to develop a clear framework and delivery plan for all current and planned non residential floorspace on the estate to ensure that the right uses are focused on the right buildings and that all of the different non residential uses on Woodberry Down complement each other and are viable and successful in their own right, and collectively to delivery exemplary placemaking and a vibrant and

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successful neighbourhood (in relation to these uses). This work will incorporate all of the studies/strategies set out in this paper as well as considering cultural programming and events. It is proposed that LB Hackney take on Stage 3 of the Social Life commission, working with all of the partners to progress this.

Alongside this work, a dedicated Woodberry Down Cultural Officer has been appointed by the Council and a programme of cultural activities is now being developed alongside the partners. The cultural programme will be included in Stage 3 of the Social Life work.

2.2 Cultural Strategy

A Cultural Plan for Phase 4 has been developed by Dallas-Pierce-Quintero (DPQ) consultants which is a chapter within the Phase 4 Planning Application Design and Access Statement. The cultural plan builds on the Social Life Report (2020) that referenced a loss of sense of place, insufficient connection to local history in earlier development phases and that people want more activities that bring people together. Building on this, DPQ has also prepared a cultural plan which is due to be submitted as part of the Phases 5-8 masterplan application.

A public art strategy was produced for Woodberry Down in 2017. This saw arts and culture as key to regeneration and was designed to guide public art commissions funded through Section 106 commitments. Although some arts projects have taken place in the intervening years, no significant bespoke public art commissions or investment have resulted. The current cultural plan takes forward a number of these aspirations including public realm activation welcoming outdoor spaces and ground floors that will accommodate a variety of uses and public art ideas and opportunities.

A Cultural Programme within Woodberry Down is in the early phases of development. Building on work undertaken to date the Cultural programme will embed a community led approach in the realisation of socially engaged projects and public artworks. Longer term, the programme aims to support the establishment of sustainable cultural infrastructure and the building of capacity in the form of cultural space and active cultural groups in Woodberry Down. The community led approach taken will be facilitated and supported by partners including invited artists, cultural organisations and community stakeholders.

Community led projects in development include.

- Commissioning an artist facilitated, child led project with London Wildlife Trust (WD Wetlands) that works with pupils from Woodberry Downs Primary School to create a distributable kids newspaper, and accompanying artwork billboard on Seven Sisters Road.
- The commissioning of an artist or group to work with The Girl Friendly Society (a community group working in Woodberry Down that exclusively works with Girls aged 5-12yrs, and 13-21yrs). The project will research and develop a possible artwork celebrating Woodberry Down Heritage with a female focus (e.g. Suffragette Gldys Evans lived in Woodberry Down), and explore ways to include female voices in the design of public space.

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- The commissioning of an artist or organisation to work with the Friends of Woodberry Down to realise public facing cultural activity aimed at older residents in Woodberry Down (e.g choral composer creating pieces with the group). Funding for the project will provide the group with the means to pay for space to meet during the summer.

2.3 Library/cultural hub feasibility study

In late 2022 the Council commissioned a library feasibility study to scope the potential for locating a new library in Woodberry Down.

The feasibility study considered a range of options including using the whole space as a library, a mixed use building incorporating a library (of different sizes- mid range and micro library) and workspace/commercial space. The study showed that additional Council revenue funding would be needed to run a new library at Woodberry Down. This is not currently available, therefore, further work will be done in the context of the other pieces of work underway in this paper, to establish the need and model, should a library/culture hub at Phase 4 (or elsewhere) progress.

The consented Phase 4 planning permission allows for a flexible mix of non residential space (commercial/community/retail) to come forward in Phase 4. The Council has the option to take on all or some of the 1215sqm space in Phase 4 and this decision does not need to be formally taken until 2027 (when the non residential space would need to start being marketed to prospective tenants, if not the Council) therefore there is time to further explore the library/cultural hub feasibility.

If the Council decides not to proceed with a library in Phase 4, the Design and Access Statement that accompanies the Phase 4 planning application includes a commitment for Berkeley Homes to bring an alternative civic use back to the Design Committee for discussion. Therefore there is sufficient time to develop an alternative strategy for the Phase 4 space, as Berkeley Homes will not be entering into leases for the non residential space in Phase 4 until 2029.

3. Existing sites and spaces update

3.1 Block D

The Council is seeking authority from Cabinet on 22 July to enter into a 299 year head lease for Block D with Berkeley Homes, and enter into a 15 year sub-lease with Mill Co. The Council and Mill Co. are continuing to work up the details of the sub lease and operational agreement, which will capture social benefit aspects of the agreement, including the option of a community fund and ways in which the space will be managed to provide benefits locally whether by providing space for certain groups, through the offer of discounted services, employment opportunities or by achieving a commercial income which is used locally in support of Woodberry Down projects. Details will be developed in relation to the business model and as greater clarity about Mill Co.'s sub-tenants is developed.

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Mill Co.'s proposal is to subdivide the space into units, and sublet to a mix of different uses with a blend of rents, providing a mix of commercial and affordable units, including flexible use of space for community groups.

With progress on the lease confirming a timeline with Mill Co. to move the project forward is a priority. Key activities include

- Finalising the sublease
- Finalise the operational agreement
- Engaging with relevant local organisations who may become users of the space
- Overall marketing strategy
- Mill Co. engagement with WDCO and local stakeholders.

3.2 The Naturalist pub

The Council is aware that Youngs are looking to sell the lease for the Naturalist Pub. Berkeley Homes disposed of the lease to Youngs and have no further rights to approve future occupiers. The Council also has limited control and will engage directly with Youngs to understand their lettings process and seek to identify suitable tenants, if possible.