

## Your New Town Hall - Q&A April 2015

### Introduction

Lambeth Council is selling off or vacating offices it no longer needs which will save around £4.5m a year in running costs and allow investment in new homes and a new Civic Centre in Brixton.

The wider Your New Town Hall project is part of a bigger change in Brixton which has already seen Windrush Square transformed, the opening of the Black Cultural Archives, Brixton Village indoor market, the launch of POP Brixton and the innovative Somerleyton Rd project well underway.

The planning applications submitted this week cover the 'Triangle' of the Town Hall, Hambrook House and Ivor House as well as the building known as The Press and Olive Morris House. You can view the planning applications on the [Planning Portal](#) using the planning reference **15/02276/ful**

The planning applications have been put in by Muse who was chosen as the council's development partner in November 2013. The applications will go to Lambeth's Planning Committee later this year and will be subject to the same scrutiny as any other application. People will have the same opportunity for comment and consultation as any other planning application.

You can read more about the [Your New Town Hall project](#) on the website.

### **Q) Are you selling the town hall?**

A) Definitely not. It's an iconic building that belongs to Lambeth. Not only is the Town Hall where council meetings are held but many public and community events such as citizenship ceremonies, weddings, parties and conferences too. It's a Grade 2 listed building and its features will be retained but the way the building is used will change. There'll be space for new businesses – twice the size of the existing Impact Hub which currently houses more than 80 businesses. There'll be more space for the community to use and the building will be more energy efficient so it'll be cheaper to run.

### **Q. Why is the Council doing this?**

A) In short, because it's common sense to get rid of buildings we no longer need, saving money every year and using our assets like buildings and land for housing. The unprecedented pressure on Lambeth to provide services with 50% of its core funding cut means we must use our assets and resources wisely, investing in projects and services that will realise the bold ambition for Lambeth and offer opportunity to everyone.

### **Q) Which buildings are included in the Your New Town Hall project?**

A) Overall we're cutting the number of council buildings from 14 to just 2, but the current planning application only deals with the Town Hall, Olive Morris House, Ivor House, Hambrook House and The Press building.

### **Q) Why are you spending money on refurbishing council offices when you are cutting services?**

A) This is about saving not spending. It's common sense to sell off old and expensive office buildings that the council no longer needs. It will cost less to run the two buildings – saving around £4.5m a year and the new civic centre will be more energy efficient and sustainable.

The council still needs offices for staff and this scheme makes sense financially and environmentally.

**Q) What's the timescale?**

A) The planning application, submitted in April 2015 will be considered by the council's Planning Applications Committee in due course. Subject to planning consent, work could start later this year.

**Q) How much will this project cost?**

Nothing. Quite simply, the money raised and saved by selling the buildings will be used to pay for new homes and the new civic centre so there is no cost to the council or taxpayers. Of course there have been some initial legal and other up-front costs in order to get to this stage but those costs will be recouped. The scheme pays for itself, will bring 194 new homes to Brixton, will revitalise Lambeth's iconic Town Hall for the 21<sup>st</sup> century, provide fit-for-purpose and sustainable offices and public meeting spaces and save £4.5m per year.

**Q) How many homes and jobs will Your New Town Hall provide?**

A) The Your New Town Hall project that will be considered by the planning committee will provide 194 new homes of which 78 will be affordable and 55 of those will be at the lower social rent. That means the planning application meets the Council's own 40% affordable housing target. You can view the planning applications on the [Planning Portal](#) using the planning reference **15/02276/ful**

The council's previous agreement with Pocket Housing (a registered social landlord or RSL) to develop the Wynne Road site means overall, the proportion of new, affordable homes in central Brixton from the wider Your New Town Hall scheme will be 47%.

The development will create around 600 new jobs, 35 apprenticeships as well as work placements. There'll also be office space for businesses and the community

**Q) What about local suppliers?**

A) It is part of the contract between Muse and Lambeth council that 60p in every £1 of construction costs will go to the local supply chain.

**Q) Will you be selling any land and / or any offices to developers?**

A) Yes, the deal with Muse means they will be developing Ivor House, Hambrook House and Olive Morris for new housing and fund the refurbishment of the Town Hall as well as the new civic centre.

**Q. Will Olive Morris still be commemorated in the new buildings?**

A. Yes and we have been discussing with Olive's family about how best to do that.

**Q. Have local people been involved or consulted?**

A. Yes, there have been dozens of events and community meetings and hundreds of residents have been involved since the idea was first proposed in late 2012 but of course residents have to right to express their views as part of the formal Planning Application process. Visit the [Designing Your New Town Hall](#) page for more information.

**Q) What are the plans for community space?**

A) That's up to local people but if you look at the Rec, the Southbank Centre Windrush Square or Brockwell Park you can see how buildings and spaces evolve as meeting places for exhibitions, events and community hubs. There will be a public courtyard and café and a brand new registry office. Some ideas can be seen on our website: [futurebrixton.org/ynth/designing-ynth/](http://futurebrixton.org/ynth/designing-ynth/). The Impact Hub for start-up businesses has already been very popular and the space for more businesses will be almost double in the refurbished building.

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