



Highgate Newtown Community Association
Highgate Newtown Mission Hall Group
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Notes of Meeting held at Camden Council Offices, 5 Pancras Rd, Kings Cross, N1C 4AG on **Thursday 4th April 2019** - from 11.45pm to about 1pm.

Present: Luke Joyce (Senior Development Manager), Simon (site manager), Louise Trewavas, Cllr Sian Berry, Cllr Anne Wright, Sally Donati, Michael Ellman, Tamar Swade, Mary Fee.
Apologies: Gabrielle Mahoney, Mary Cane, Thanos Morphitis.

Sally, advised by Thanos, had briefed us to focus on the issues set out below:

- **Purpose of Meeting:** To establish a partnership between Camden Council and the Mission Hall Group that will enable the charity to retain the Hall for community benefit in perpetuity
- **Agreement to allow purchase:** We have had a very positive response from Councillor Anna Wright which indicates that the Council is willing to allow the Mission Hall Group to purchase the Hall. Is this sufficient confirmation of the Council's formal position? Does it need to be confirmed in writing by the relevant Director?
- **Time period for raising funds:** Councillor Anna Wright indicated in her email that we would be allowed 4-5 months in the lead up to tendering the project to raise the required funds. We would wish to request for this to be reconsidered in order to give us as much time as possible to raise the necessary funds. Our understanding is that Mission Hall will be used by the contractors as a base for their workforce during the demolition and construction. We assume, therefore, that the actual conversion of the Mission Hall would not take place until well into the contract period. We would ask that the Council confirms with the successful contractor exactly when they would need formal notice that they are proceeding with the Mission Hall conversion in order to provide as much time as possible for us to raise the necessary funds.
- **Price of purchase:** We have heard the figure of £1.5m mentioned as the sum required by the Council. We noted that in the papers to the Planning Committee, the conversion costs were stated as £700k. Does this mean that the estimated selling price for the two houses is £2.2m? Would it be possible for the tender process to acknowledge this issue and request the tenderers to submit a price for the entire development as agreed by Planning and within that a clear price for converting the Mission Hall? In that way, we would know the exact conversion cost when the successful tender is accepted. Would the Council then be willing to get an up to date valuation of the two town houses, so we can be sure of the real amount required by the council? We are conscious of rising building costs and falling property selling prices and would wish to have the most accurate and realistic fundraising target for the Hall.
- **Meeting Outcome:** We would appreciate if the above matters could be confirmed in writing as prospective funders will need some proof that the council is allowing this proposal to be pursued.

Luke Joyce outlined the schedule of the redevelopment: Fresh Youth Academy continues on site until the end of May, Ricky (woodwork) also remains on site until relocated. Before demotion there will be an asbestos survey (3 weeks) involving drilling into the floor and walls of the Hall, and remediation work (4-6 weeks) then an Ecological Impact survey (bats and birds), all of which will include the Hall, taking us to the end of August, after which Camden will procure the main demolition contract, to include the FYA extension, restoring the adjoining wall, but mostly likely retaining access to the Hall for the builders - the contractors who are bidding will have to specify two options on they will carry out the works: we understood that the Hall itself would not be subject to any conversation until a late stage, but were concerned about potential damage to its structure.

Simon added that they needed to check with procurement colleagues what options were being removed – if we give them all the options it will impact on their ability to deliver the scheme.

Mary Fee pointed out that if we are going to raise funds to purchase the building we need to see exactly what it consists of, and obtain copies of the floor plans. We gather that the Hall would be minus the FYA extension, but there were areas we had not seen, like the upstairs and the studio and kitchen off the main Hall: In response **Luke Joyce** suggested we offer two dates which he would put to the staff of FYA - *after email consultation we agreed a date in the following week.* She also asked about allowing access to the property during the development period, pointing out that this is currently through the FYA, with the two doors opening to Winscombe Street only working as Emergency Exits - there was not yet a clear answer to this. **Anna Wright** pointed out that delaying the conversion of the Hall, should they still carry this out, would involve major deliveries to the site via Winscombe Street, which would not make the neighbours very happy.

Sian Berry said that the key thing is to get the local residents on board, and also we need to approach the politicians in Camden, asking them what other options there were for raising money.

Anna Wright emphasised that notwithstanding the presence of the punch bag holders, which had already damaged the walls, and the need for some drilling to be carried out, contractors need to adopt an attitude that it was being preserved and thus limit the damage as much as possible – one idea that was suggested was covering the parquet with hardboard whilst the builders were on site.

Luke Joyce responding to a query from Sian, explained that the demolition job would also involve removal of the petrol tanks (currently buried in the area where the bins are), and working around the sewers – he also said that some parquet floors have asbestos in the fixings, so the amount of work and disruption to the existing floor was unpredictable.

Anna Wright advised contacting potential donors early on, and rather than planning a big “event” we should arrange an open day whilst the FYA is still in residence, ie by the end of May, have music and refreshments, and invite all potential donors (and neighbours) to view it - also contributing their ideas about future uses of the Hall. It might even be possible to find one person prepared to buy it.

Sally Donati asked how they established the sales price of the current property, **Michael Ellman** doubted they would achieve the projected £2.2m were they to proceed with converting the Hall to two terraced properties: **Luke Joyce** conceded that the market might change and they would keep the asking price under review.

Sian Berry was concerned whether a charity was the correct model and suggested considering a Community Interest Company: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Community_interest_company and for research purposes recommended the Camden History Society: <http://www.camdenhistorysociety.org>

Tamar Swade sought assurances about keeping the Hall available for community use, but both staff and Councillors emphasised that they need to support the budgetary needs of Camden Council.

SUMMARY: Agreed Action Points:

1. Obtain a “letter of comfort” from Camden Council, expressing support for the project.
2. Take steps to ensure that users of the Hall throughout the building process take care of it.
3. Arrange an initial viewing next week – agreed date: **Wednesday 10th April from 12.30pm.**
4. Set a date by the end of May 2019 for an Open Viewing Event.
5. Make sure we have an indication of progress by the end of July 2019.
6. We also agreed keep each other informed as the project develops.