

## **Joint Statement from Resident Organisations of Canalside House to Council's Decision to Sell the Building**

We, the residents of Canalside House, wish to respond to the RBKC Executive Decision Report regarding Canalside House dates 12<sup>th</sup> January 2018, the Scrutiny Committee meeting discussion on Canalside House on 15<sup>th</sup> January 2018 as well as previous Council decisions and statements regarding the building and its future.

The organisations in Canalside House met on Monday 29<sup>th</sup> January to discuss the Council's decision to sell Canalside House. Outcome of the meeting:

1. All organisations present reported that the 2016 "consultation" quoted by Councillors Taylor-Smith and Palmer and Director of Corporate Property, Richard Egan, were not consultations at all.

Each organisation reported that they were given absolutely no choice over whether they would leave Canalside House, move to a new site on Latimer Road, nor was any organisation consulted on the layout and decoration of the new site.

2. For the record, the responses of each organisation to the sale of Canalside House and the relocation to Latimer Road are attached separately.
3. As you can see, 100% of the resident organisations prefer to stay at Canalside House and consider the Latimer Road site unsuitable.
4. Specifically, on the Latimer Road site, at the 29<sup>th</sup> January meeting, the organisations identified a number of shared concerns: poor transport links, space reductions, no privacy / confidential consulting space and the Council's edict that organisations could not keep paper records or IT servers on site, would all make the provision of important community services extremely difficult.
5. We would like to emphasise the role played by Canalside organisations in the aftermath of the Grenfell Tower tragedy. The voluntary and charity sectors, with other local organisations, played a crucial role in providing emergency services to the community during and after the fire.

The organisations at Canalside have continued to support the affected community. We have the trust of the community and, given our collective efforts and successes in supporting those most in need, we are disappointed at the council's decision to press ahead with the sale of one of North Kensington's last remaining community buildings at a time when it is needed more than ever.

6. Additionally, we have identified a number of statements made by councillors and RBKC officials that are either inaccurate or misleading:

Director of Corporate Property Richard Egan said that the residents "support what we are doing" and "the people in there don't like being in there" – the residents do not understand on what basis these statements are made.

Councillors on the committee said that Canalside House is "not a good building" and "not fit for the modern era." We believe that the building needs refurbishment and modernisation, but it appears that these options have not been properly considered by the council.

7. At the meeting, on the 29<sup>th</sup> we heard that an offer of a grant by the Tudor Trust to pay for the installation of a lift at Canalside House that was ignored by the council – this undermines the argument made by RBKC officials and councillors regarding disabled access.
8. We are aware that another misleading statement made by the council was to quote Kensington and Chelsea Social Council as being supportive of the sale of Canalside House and the move to Latimer Road. On the contrary, they oppose the sale and move, and we understand they have written to the Council under separate cover to clarify their position.
9. The residents of Canalside House request the following:

**We urgently need clarification from the council on:**

Why residents of Canalside House were not informed about the Property Scrutiny Committee meeting on Monday 15th January 2018

Why the views of residents at this meeting were totally misrepresented.

**We would wish to see**

An immediate halt to the planned redevelopment of Canalside House whilst the proper promised consultation takes place.

Full transparency and disclosure on the consideration of investment in Canalside House – Lift, window repairs etc.

The Council fulfil its promises "**Council has made a commitment to re-house the occupants of Canalside House in suitable alternative accommodation**" Where we the residents inform on its suitability – not the Council.

Given that Latimer Road has been deemed inappropriate by all residents of Canalside House – some serious alternative suggestions put forward.

## **Canalside House Residents Comments**

### **Colville & Clydesdale Co-operative**

We would prefer to stay at Canalside House.

We prefer to stay as Canalside House is on direct bus route from our co-operative housing making access easier for staff and our members.

Some of our work is confidential and the private office space is welcome.

We have paper records and require the use of filing cabinets.

We have not visited the Latimer Road site but understand this is an open plan office and we are not sure how we will share the p.c. and printer as we do at present. We are also advised there will be no paper filing facility.

Our members were active immediately following the fire and some are still involved in community support groups.

Our Co-op made a donation to K&C Foundation to assist in the community work.

We have secured the allocation of a neighbouring social housing flat from our landlord Catalyst Housing Ltd, to a survivor of Grenfell.

We have made ourselves available for allocation of social housing should any vacancy occur in our managed properties. There has been nothing to date.

### **OTHER**

We would like to be involved in the ongoing attempt to retain Canalside House as a voluntary sector community facility.

Should we be unsuccessful, we have proposals on how any conversion to housing should take place - namely that this should be (at least in part) social housing and this can be managed by us on a co-operative basis.

### **Hope Care Agency:**

Agenda; Canalside House residents.

We would like to stay Canalside House because the local community knows where we are and that we can support them. We know some of the survivors of the fire.

Some area need refurbishment for health and safety reason especially toilet, windows.

We want to know the details of council plan.

I want to know what is happening and be updated.

**Baraka Community Association:**

Baraka wants to stay at Canalside

Canalside offers Baraka service users excellent transport links, sufficient parking, space to work, privacy for meetings, the office is ideally located close to local schools and the homes of many service users

The proposed site at Latimer Road offers none of the above and is wholly inadequate for Baraka's service users

During and after the Grenfell Tower fire Baraka has been active in supporting the local community. Initially, all our staff and volunteers were on the ground helping in the crisis. We then provided support for people enabling them to access vital services and acting as advocates. This work has continued to date. Additionally, during the summer Baraka took hundreds of people affected by the fire away from North Kensington on three different trips, to a theme park, to the English countryside and to the coast. Over Christmas, Baraka provided free activities for children and families, including bowling, a trip to Kidzania and a community meal.

**Rain Trust**

As a follow up to our meeting on Monday I wish to confirm that from the Rain Trust perspective our preference is the Canalside House for the following key points:

Canalside House has:

- Sufficient parking spaces including disabled facility
- Easy Public transport access
- Offers private space for confidential advice/counselling
- A more community connection

Ideally it will be cheaper to refurbish Canalside House.

There is also a general concern for the lack of notification with regard to the scrutiny meeting where Canalside House was an agenda item but no invitation extended to tenants probably we deserve more clarification from the local Authority and their short term future plan.

## **African Women's Care**

Following the meeting held on Monday 29th January 2018, we at we at African Women's Care (AWC) states that our preference is to stay at the Canalside House. The reason being that the proposed moved and provision at Latimer will not be appropriate for our client group. We provide services to support women affected and experiencing domestic violence as such confidentiality issue is paramount.

Secondly we serve the three boroughs, Westminster, K&C and H&F, the location at Canalside House is accessible for all our client from the three boroughs. We have also been delivering the hot lunch for the residents of Grenfell fire and continues to provide post-traumatic support, the main reason why the residents came to us was that they wanted a place out from the scene at Latimer Road, and we continue to provide that for them.

We would like to remain at Canalside House, and agree that Canalside should be fully refurbished.

## **Portobello Business Centre**

In the absence of alternative premises fit for purpose (which Latimer Road clearly is not) our preference would be to remain in Canalside House. Whilst not perfect Canalside House offers great transport links for service users, parking facilities, is ideally located within W10.

It offers shared training and private meeting room facilities.

The addition of hot desk facilities within the building offers additional opportunities for Portobello Business Centre to provide much needed facilities and engage opportunities with the local micro business community.

Portobello Business Centre has led and been the only engagement partner to the beleaguered business community post Grenfell, including victim's residents and survivors from Grenfell Tower. We have identified 85 businesses, provided access to compensation advice and support to over 45 business and some 152 employees.

We have already expressed over 12 months ago that Latimer Road does not meet our needs. Whilst we might have interest in managing such a unit, the building is too far removed from public access has poor transport links and will not offer the training facilities or private counselling rooms we require.

In the RBKC Executive Decision Report 11 February 2016 residents of Canalside house took comfort from the Council decision that

4.3.7 In line with its general efforts to secure the future of a local voluntary sector in Kensington and Chelsea the Council has made a commitment to re-house the occupants of Canalside House in suitable alternative accommodation. Should approval be granted for the strategy described in this paper, the Council will commence consultation with the occupants in regard to their relocation. The earliest date on which vacant possession of Canalside House is likely to be needed is mid-2018. This would provide a period of 24 months to identify alternative premises, consult tenants and arrange for relocation.

The recently acquired property at 12 Latimer Road provides one possible site for Canalside tenants. It is possible that additional or alternative (and even more suitable) opportunities will emerge during the period prior to the vacation of Canalside House.

From the outset and at our meeting with RBKC the premises at Latimer Road has been deemed unsuitable yet no other alternative has ever been considered or offered by the Council.

Given these facts Portobello Business Centres preference would be to stay at Canalside House

### **Hodan Somali Community**

"We want to stay at Canalside House. It offers convenience and excellent transport. Most of our clients are local to the office. It also gives them privacy during meetings.

Latimer Road offers none of the above

During the Grenfell fire we provided emergency support on the ground. And ever since we have been supporting those directly and indirectly affected in the community. For example, we are running ongoing trips away for local children in North Kensington.

### **Talk Together London CIC**

Further to our conversation last week about the prospect of eviction from Canalside House, I am writing to express our organisation's view in support of remaining at Canalside House and against eviction to the proposed venue in Latymer Road. (I am sorry that there has been a week's delay in sending this message due to illness with flu and we are not in the office today either because of flu.)

Talk Together London CIC offers services to children and young people of ages 6 to 19 and their parents, carers and families. Canalside House has been accessible for our service users who attend literacy and numeracy sessions and story writing and maths workshops after school. It is close to several schools in the area and parents and carers bring their children after collecting them from school.

Canalside House is placed on a main road and between three rail stations - Ladbroke Grove, Kensal Rise and Kensal Green - and next to two bus stops which are on the routes of numbers 23, 52, 70, 228, 295, 316 and 452. The proposed venue in Latymer Road is, in comparison, not accessible for service users because of where it is situated. For example, the mothers we consulted said that moving means it will be difficult for them to come to our after-school sessions at 4.00 p.m. after they collect their children from school. Therefore, eviction will mean that existing service users will not be able to access our services any longer and potential service users will not be able to find us either as the proposed site is not known to the residents of the borough. As a result, we would not be able to deliver our services in the borough.

Canalside House offers shared office space for small not-for-profit organisations that follow guidance on data protection and confidentiality in running their services. There are two offices which are shared on a schedule by different organisations and we can be found in one of these - Office 2 - on Wednesdays. Since we are the only organisation in Office 2 on Wednesdays, it is possible to have confidential conversations with parents, carers, children and young people. Talk Together London CIC is registered with the Information Commissioner's Office. The proposed venue in Latymer Road is one big open space office, which means that it will not be possible to hold confidential conversations; we understand that small pods to be used as interview rooms were included in the proposals, however, we do not think that pods are suitable for interviewing families with children or children and young people. If we cannot hold

confidential interviews or conversations and families and children will not feel comfortable, again, we will not be able to deliver our services.

In summary, our view is that the proposed Latymer Road site for evicting Canalside House Licencees is not fit for purpose because it is not accessible to service users and the proposed design of the site does not allow for confidentiality of service provision. Moving there would affect the organisations currently delivering services at Canalside House and services delivered in the borough would be impacted negatively.

## **WSSP**

WSSP wants to stay at Canalside House. Canalside House offers privacy for meetings, easy transport links, parking spaces, it is a great location. However, the Latimer Road site does not give WSSP any of these things.

Grenfell support role: Advocacy work for people with housing needs in the aftermath of the fire; organised a poster and public speaking contest for children affected by the disaster; ran a number of marathons to raise awareness and raise money for victims.