

RJK and Hillman: Our Vision for the Playtower

Our vision for the Playtower is to create an exciting and dynamic cultural quarter for Ladywell, while transforming a building that was originally designed to separate people by class into a thriving site that brings people together and encourages them to interact and create. Our vision has three strands:

I. Restore and rejuvenate the Playtower

We see the Playtower housing a rich mix of performances, events, artist/maker studios, cafes, creative business offices, art galleries, a communal garden-courtyard, restaurants, health and well-being studios, a small cinema and community organizations. The jewel in the crown will be transforming the incredible former first-class pool area into a dynamic performance and event space. This space could become one of the most unique and intriguing performance venues in London and we will work with our partners at the Albany Theatre in Deptford to programme a range of commercial and community performances by everyone from leading arts organizations to local people.

II. 'More-than-enabling' development

The restoration of the Playtower alone is estimated at £5 million. Our model focuses on creating a thriving community centre as opposed to exploiting the site's full potential for commercial return. As such, we will need to raise money through a variety of forms, including grants, finance and enabling development. We are proposing to build, subject to planning permission, three new buildings on the site, all sensitively designed to fit in with the Playtower and other surrounding heritage buildings. This new 'family' of buildings will include a block of twenty rentable flats, a modest building with four rentable live/work units and 'The Pavilion' - a commercial building we will rent out to multiple tenants in the same way as the Playtower.

III. Social Impact and Community Engagement

In creative and thriving communities, people and businesses don't just take, they give back. As such, as part of the business model, we will form a Community Interest Company (CIC) which will provide a range of ongoing social impact and community engagement projects on site. The CIC will be funded by an annual '3% for outreach' levy on leaseholders and share-holder's profit. We envisage regular community events like open studios, festivals and celebrations as well as outreach projects like 'Meet Me At The Albany' (an arts and health programme for older people in sheltered accommodation). We also want to set up training, work experience and internship opportunities for young people. We are even considering housing a Lewisham History Museum.

Achieving this multi-dimensional vision requires commercial nous, professional experience, local knowledge, creative thinking, aesthetic sensitivity and a commitment to community and positive social impact. We believe we bring all of this to the project, and more, because our team is local. Our bid is led by the family behind [Copeland Park and the Bussey Building](#) in Peckham, whose surveying business has been in Hither Green for 25 years, and [Hillman Construction](#), whose family-owned business has been in Hither Green for 30 years. Also involved are the Albany Theatre in Deptford and local Brockley resident Sydney Thornbury, former CEO responsible for turning around The Blackheath Conservatoire and currently transforming the Mansion in Beckenham Place Park.

Community Benefit

In addition to the above, we feel our proposal will benefit the local community through: increased economic activity, bringing new people with creative and entrepreneurial skills to the area, returning the Playtower and open space around it to active use by the community, raising Lewisham's profile as a destination point for work, living and entertainment amongst young creatives and entrepreneurs, increasing the number of affordable rental homes in the area, improving the entertainment, food and cultural offer for the local community, providing opportunities for employment and training