



## Huguenot House Options Consultation

### Summary of answers to questions raised at webinars

#### Overview

This document sets out answers to questions raised by residents and stakeholders at Huguenot House options consultation webinars held on:

- 19 November 2020
- 25 November 2020
- 1 December 2020

#### Questions and Answers

##### **Consultation:**

##### **Why are you consulting now during the pandemic?**

We appreciate that uncertainty, over an option progressing, may cause concern for residents and commercial tenants. For this reason, we could not delay concluding the consultation and so decided to proceed with our consultation activities with the view to concluding them on 15 January 2021.

Whilst, unfortunately, we cannot safely meet in person, we have provided many ways for residents and other stakeholders to take part in this consultation including, online, email, phone or post.

##### **Why are you still consulting on the six options presented in 2017?**

Our advice is that all options presented since the start of this consultation should remain as they are for review or comment. Therefore, these are still being presented in addition to our six refreshed versions and one new option.

##### **Why didn't you scrap this consultation (that started in 2017) and start again?**

The options are very similar, and the feedback on these is beneficial. All feedback to date, since we began this consultation in 2017, will be considered alongside several factors when we decide a preferred way forward for Huguenot House in early 2021.

##### **Why won't you meet with us in person?**

The safety of residents and staff is our priority and the government guidance to slow the spread of Covid-19, states such meetings shouldn't take place in-person at this time.

We're confident that residents still have every opportunity to engage with us safely, by phone, email, post or online. We are continuously reviewing the guidance and if it changes before 15 January 2021, and it's safe to do so, we will be open to 'Covid-19 Secure' meetings onsite at Huguenot House.

##### **Will there be a planning consultation?**

It depends on the option. For any option which would require planning permission, there would be extensive pre-planning consultation.



### Historical Issues and Background

#### **A few years ago, the council was clear it wanted to develop here – has this changed?**

There is no preferred way forward, and all the options are still under consultation.

#### **Why hasn't the council refurbished the building already?**

We have maintained the building, including repairs, in line with health and safety regulations. Many of the options for consultation include refurbishment of the building.

#### **You told residents Option 4a\* was your preferred in 2018, why isn't it anymore?**

The options presented in this consultation reflect socio-economic and regulatory changes since 2018, and we are consulting on them all for your equal consideration. There is no preferred way forward, and all the options are still under consultation.

#### **How have regulations and the socio-economic context changed since the last consultation events?**

The context has changed significantly in the past few years, with factors such as Brexit, general elections, changes in government, and the current Covid-19 crisis all having an impact.

Changes to regulations and policies include:

##### *Building regulations*

- **Fire Safety** - approved Document B (2019 edition with 2020 amendments)
- **Material and Workmanship** - approved Document 7 (2013 edition with 2018 amendments) which relates to the restriction of combustible materials in external walls of certain buildings over 18m in height.

##### *Planning regulations*

- **New London Plan** – this is the principal change since the previous consultation, which has been the subject of consultation and Examination in Public since 2017. It is not yet formally adopted but is at an advanced stage, and those policies which are not the subject of further review between the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, and Greater London Assembly may carry significant weight in decision making.
- **Westminster's City Plan 2019/2040** – our adopted planning policy remains the 'Westminster City Plan'. However, we have a new 'City Plan 2019/2040' progressing through Examination in Public and likely to be adopted in 2021.

##### *Affordable housing policies*

- **The Mayor's Affordable Housing & Viability Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG)** – published in August 2017, this guides the interpretation and application of affordable housing policies in the London Plan and applies to a development providing ten or more homes. As part of this, a new 'Threshold Approach' requires delivery of at least 50% affordable housing from the development of publicly owned land unless justified by viability. The level of affordable housing must be maximised if existing affordable housing is redeveloped.
- Our emerging 'City Plan 2019/2040', which is yet to be adopted, also reflects this approach and requires 50% of new homes to be affordable where viable.



**Existing use:**

**How under-used is the car park?**

According to data from the car park operator, large parts aren't commercially viable anymore, and entire floors have been 'moth-balled', meaning they have been taken out of use because of low demand.

**Are the existing offices not well used?**

The offices are not up to modern standards, don't fulfil employment and economic potential, and therefore do not provide a good return on investment.

**Options**

**How many options are there?**

There are thirteen options in this consultation for review and comment.

Seven options are refreshed or new plus the six options as presented in our 2017-18 consultation events.

**How is refurbishment different than maintenance?**

The refurbishment would replace items over a shorter time, estimated to be around 18 months, compared to the maintenance option to be completed gradually over thirty years.

Through refurbishment items such as the lifts would be replaced entirely. The maintenance option would maintain and repair the existing building.

Leaseholders would only be charged for maintenance and major works in either case, which is why the estimated costs for these options are identical.

**Are there circumstances where the council would sell the building?**

All options for equal consideration, including sale. However, it would not be in line with our usual practice to sell the building.

**Why did you decide to include a new option?**

We developed a new option based on recent market research and to reflect the changing socio-economic and regulatory context.

**Why did the council choose to deliver a hotel and casino in the new option, instead of new homes?**

Huguenot House generates essential income for the delivery of our frontline services. We are obliged to ensure we deliver value for money for all Westminster's taxpayers, as well as maximise the building's potential. This new option balances good commercial outcomes with the delivery of modern new homes, offices and amenities.

Recent market research shows that this site would be well suited to a hotel and casino, with hotels especially underprovided in central London.

**Environmental Sustainability**

**What do you mean by high environmental standards?**

We are targeting very high sustainability standards, including aiming for a carbon-neutral operational building. We aim to meet Passivhaus standards for residential areas and Building



Research Establishment Environmental Assessment Method (BREEAM) excellence for the commercial elements.

We will evaluate how we can reuse or recycle parts of the frame of the original building, for any option which involves taking the building down.

Detailed environmental assessments for each option can be viewed at [www.westminster.gov.uk/huguenot-house](http://www.westminster.gov.uk/huguenot-house).

### **Leaseholder Concerns**

#### **Will leaseholders need to pay anything towards these works?**

It depends on the option. For maintenance and any option that includes refurbishment, such as the Podium Scheme or conversion of the offices, leaseholders would need to make contributions for some elements of the work, as stipulated in your lease.

These costs are estimated at between £25,000 and £45,000.

#### **Why are leaseholder costs the same for many options? How have the leaseholder charges been estimated?**

Costs are determined by the lease which notes that only costs for maintenance can be recharged. This includes major works.

Our team has estimated the total cost of each option, after considering the leases and working with your managing agents, Aston Rose.

#### **Many leaseholders in the block are older with limited income and savings. How will the council support in paying for these leasehold charges?**

We recognise the range of £25,000–45,000 is significant. The money would be due under the lease, but we would be understanding if these costs were to cause hardship and work with you to arrange a way to manage the payments on a one-to-one basis.

#### **Can it be confirmed that there will be no changes to tenancy or lease agreements, across all resident types?**

Nothing will change if people are moving out temporarily and coming back to the same homes, for example with refurbishment or any options which include refurbishment.

If a redevelopment option is chosen, the lease agreements will change as it would be a new property that residents would be returning to. Tenants with secure tenancies would keep these.

#### **Many of the options require private tenants to move out, will the council compensate the loss of rental income for non-resident leaseholders?**

We would have to speak with non-resident leaseholders on an individual basis as any situation arises.

#### **When will the council buy flats in Huguenot House, if leaseholders wanted to sell?**

The council continues to talk to leaseholders but a preferred way forward will need to be decided before we can discuss purchase of flats that may or may not be affected by the option chosen.

#### **How does the council determine Market Value?**

The council has a diverse and professional team including Gerald Eve, chartered surveyors, who work with us to determine the value of the properties. The method used for determining market value is set by Royal institute of Chartered Surveyors.



## **Relocations**

### **Why do you need residents to move for the two partial redevelopment options?**

The health and safety of residents is foremost for the council. Due to the scope of the works (including replacing walls, windows, and essential services like electricity and water), the advice we have received is that residents would need to move out during the works.

### **Which options require residents to move, and do you know when they would have to do so?**

The only option which wouldn't require moving, at least temporarily, is maintenance.

Once a preferred way forward is decided, the council will be able to determine a delivery plan which will give much more detail on when, and for how long, residents would need to move. There will be extensive engagement whichever option is progressed and the council will offer as much support as possible to minimise disruption for residents.

### **Most options require us to move, would we be re-housed nearby?**

For those we have an obligation to rehouse, we will try to keep you as close as possible to Huguenot House, appreciating you'll want to be close to networks of friends and family.

We encourage all residents to start those discussions early, so housing needs can be understood. If you have concerns, we can have a one-to-one session so we can talk through your circumstances.

## **Wider Neighbourhood**

### **Would this project include any improvement to the public space / realm?**

This depends on the preferred way forward. Redevelopment options would include contributions towards public realm works, as would be required by any developer. When looking at the design of the redevelopment options, we've been considering the building's relationship to the public space / realm along with appropriate uses, locations and entrances.

### **This building is in the heart of London, has the council considered using it for a civic purpose?**

All the options we are considering have been presented as part of this consultation.

### **Would the council consider pedestrianising the roads nearby?**

The project can't comment on this directly as this is a matter for the council's Highways Team. However, we would be happy to pass on any comments and suggestions to the relevant team to consider.

### **How will you manage disruption during any construction period?**

There will be a detailed construction management plan drawn-up should a redevelopment option go ahead which will ensure that all deliveries to the site are well managed and disruption is minimised for residents in the area. This plan will include information on how deliveries to site will be made and how the contractor will minimise disruption, including dust and noise. All contractors on Westminster's developments are required to join the Considerate Construction Scheme and sign up to its principles. You can read more here: <https://www.ccscheme.org.uk>