

Message from Tim Godsmark, Chair of GLERA:

As you may know that despite stating in the planning and listed buildings applications for the refurbishment of the Community Centre that there were no plans to move the Estate Office there they appear to have been planning this all along. Because the planning permission did not permit them to move it in they have been forced to apply for change of use planning permission for the part of the building that they want to use.

The reason for moving the office is to provide more social housing in the base of Great Arthur House but we now learn that one of the flats is going to be used by St Barts and will do nothing to reduce the housing waiting list. Both are valuable uses but the City is essentially giving the Estate Office away to an organisation that is undergoing the biggest PFI contract in the country and which is not short of space.

I am opposed to this because the centre has always been for community use and a part of a valuable community resource is being taken away from us. There are other reasons. The office is too small for all the housing office staff. It has been suggested that the staff hot desk but what do the staff who don't get a desk do? Huddle under canopies when it is raining? The new office has no windows at eye level so the desire of the staff to hide away that manifested itself when they put mirrored film over the windows of the existing office will make a comeback. Lastly the change may affect the financial position of the Community Centre as it may have to pay business rates which it previously would not.

My main fear is that this is the thin edge of a wedge and the Estate Office will find in the future that it needs more space and as time goes on we may not have a community centre left.

Community Centre – Objections

Having attended meetings re this matter already and witnessed nearly the entire room voting overwhelmingly that they did not wish for the Estate office to be moved into the community centre, I'm somewhat surprised to find myself having to write this email. Personally I feel that the community centre was designed with the community in mind (by award winning architects) and having spoken to many of the more elderly residents, it worked as such and was always a vibrant, family and community oriented space. It was an asset to the community. Golden Lane Estate today still has a fantastic sense of community and residents are working hard to keep this going and envisage that our new community centre will play a vital role in this and will be a hive of activity and offer social and community opportunities for everyone. It was never meant for the City of London offices and was meant to be used by residents. To have the estate office moved here, taking up vital space, in order that the City of London can renovate the offices in Great Arthur into flats simply disregards the views and wishes of the residents. Currently the Estate Office deals with many contractors coming and going, various repair issues, parking permits, as well as tenants needing advice. I feel this work should take place in a designated estate office, as it always has. Every spare bit of space in London is being built on by developers trying to make as much money as possible, now it feels that this is happening even on our estate.

