

A new Southwark Pensioners Centre

Frequently asked questions

Q: How is funding assured and what is the programme?

A: Southwark Council has committed £1m of strategic Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) funding to the project and there is a match funding target of £1m for the Southwark Pensioners Centre to raise. While a fundraising strategy is in place, some funders require planning permission to award funding and our programme is to submit planning in Spring 2024 and open the new centre in 2025.

Q: How much space is there in the new premises?

A: The new space is almost twice the size of the current centre. 218sqm v 418sqm split between ground floor and basement. Rooms will be designed for flexibility to meet the needs of activities and users now and in the future. There is also an external courtyard.

Q: How are you addressing accessibility in the design?

A: Building regulations will be adhered to throughout the design and construction of the new centre and we have also stated that enhancements to those standards need to meet the access requirements of the main user group. The designs include lift access, generous stairs with landings, generous lobby and circulation routes, accessible WC's as standard and will meet fire safety requirements.

Q: How are you addressing sustainability in the design? If you design with carbon neutrality to help costs this will allow access to more funding.

A: BREEAM excellent certification is required by the brief to make sure high environmental standards are achieved. We are also investigating the use of WELL certification. The Council has sustainability requirements through its [zero carbon targets](#) which the project will need to meet.

A change of use from retail to community space will necessitate an improvement in building performance, to being more airtight, better glazing, ventilation and insulation. Working to BREEAM excellent requires a high level of building performance.

Q: We must plan for a pandemic and good ventilation is very important in the design. Respiratory illness is key for this group and the basement could be a problem.

A: Light wells are a successful way to bring in light and air into basements and there is likely to be an element of mechanical ventilation in the design. Some excavation is also being investigated to help ventilate the basement. Ventilation will be addressed and checked through the design process and specialists involved to make sure it is effective and efficient.

Q: How will you bring natural light into the basement as this is important?

A: Light wells are a technique that is very successful for bringing natural light into basement spaces and this will be developed through the design process balancing all the project needs. Some excavation is also being investigated to help bring light into the basement. Internal glazing is also a method to help light reach further into the building.

Q: How will activities be managed to avoid loud noise from one room disturbing another?

A: There is a need to create acoustic separation in the design and make sure activities can comfortably run in rooms next to each other and above or below one another. Compatible uses can be managed through programming activities but recognise that is not always possible.

Q: There is a lot of glazing on the front of the centre, will this still allow for privacy and will the building get very hot?

A: We will look at ways to manage privacy and sun through opaque glass, blinds or curtains and UV protection on the glass. This means that users have a choice in how open or private spaces are. Sometimes you might want to promote the kinds of activities you are doing and sometimes they need to be private. A canopy and recessed entrance on the building will also help manage solar glare and overheating.

Q: The new centre is in a parade of shops, will it be easy to identify as a special place for older people?

A: The 3 units are on the end of a shopping parade and we are creating a unique street frontage to help the centre stand out. We will also be looking at signage as part of the changes to the premises.

Q: Safety and ease of movement is very important for vulnerable people. Design for movement, hearing and visual disabilities. Emergency facilities need to be spot on and take into account the increased health issues with older people.

A. We will be addressing all vulnerabilities and disabilities through the design and have experience in achieving successful buildings. A specialised access consultant will also review designs during the process and make sure they are fit for purpose.

Q: How will members participate in the project and be represented on the Steering Group?

A: Consultation exercises have been run with different groups of members including the User Forum, SPAG and sharing questionnaires with members. There is also a project Steering Group and that has member, staff and trustee representation. There will be ongoing consultation with members and the wider community throughout the project.

Q: What happens if the planning process is not successful?

A: There is a pre-application process for planning with the opportunity to discuss designs and address any concerns raised by the Planning Authority. Most of the

works are to the interior as it is an existing building and this reduces the risk of being unsuccessful through the planning process.

Q: How will the centre meet the running costs of a bigger space?

A: There is the option to hire spaces, increase the number of members, and members being more involved in running the centre. The building is being designed for low cost operation with robust finishes, energy efficiency and simplicity for repairs. We still need to think about how we maintain the level of knowing each other that is currently a key feature of the centre when it is a bigger space.

Q: The beginning of the centre was the Southwark Pensioners Action Group standing up for older people's right and this needs to continue in the new centre.

A: Flexible rooms will be able to be used for many different activities and sized gatherings. Generous storage is included in the designs and regular groups will have some assigned to them.

Q: We need to be able to access the centre via transport and get to other activities.

A: The centre has a Public Transport Accessibility Level (PTAL) rating of 6a with a number of buses stopping in front of the shopping parade or across the road. We will be working with Housing Dept. to find parking solutions for the new centre and looking to include cycle stands.