In December 2017, Southwark Council opened a marketing opportunity to seek investment and bring the Grade II listed Walworth Town Hall complex back into active use.

Initially, council sought expressions of interest from a considered list of developers and organisations and subsequently advertised to the open market. From a list of seventeen submissions the council shortlisted three and invited them to develop their proposals further. In November 2018 the council received two proposals from Castleforge Partners and General Projects presenting different approaches to rejuvenate the buildings.

As part of the evaluation of the two proposals a community consultation was carried out. This report outlines that process and summarises the responses. Consultation on the competing proposals was undertaken from late November through to 21 January 2019.

**Purpose of the consultation process**

The WTH complex are important buildings within community and civic life and the consultation on the proposals was to let people see what was being proposed by the bidders and give the opportunity for comment. We were especially interested in what people thought about the different uses the bidders included, whether the heritage listing was enhanced and respected and what people thought about the public access provision. The consultation results were included as part of the wider evaluation and subsequent decision making process.

**What was included in the consultation process?**

- Direct email to 300+ contact list directing people to the online consultation and public event
- Press release about the two competing proposals and outline of consultation opportunities
- Article on the process and proposals in Elephant magazine
- Southwark Social media alerting to the online consultation, public meeting and drop in sessions
- Southwark Online consultation hub: proposal summaries available and questionnaire
- Public meeting: 12 December 7pm-9pm hosted by Southwark Council and the Walworth Society. Filmed and posted online for viewing.
- Proposal summaries and background info on walworthtownhall.com and southwark.gov.uk/wth website
- Proposal summary display and 3x drop in sessions (12-15 Dec) at the Art Academy
- Proposal summary display in WTH garden with links to online consultation

**Results**

Online consultation participants: 120
Public meeting with presentations by the bidders attendance: 35
Youtube viewings: 353

Drop in sessions with the bidders attendance:
  - Wednesday 12 December 5-7pm (6)
  - Thursday 13 December 2-4pm (2)
  - Saturday 15 December 12-2pm (4)

A public meeting was co-hosted by Southwark Council and the Walworth Society on the 12 December 2018 with both bidders making presentations and taking questions. Questions were also
put to Councillors and officers. There were approximately 35 attendees at the meeting and the
event was filmed and made available online for those unable to attend. The bidders were also
available at drop in sessions over three days from the 12 to 15 December 2018 to answer questions
on their proposals. Summary boards of the proposals have been on display in the Walworth Town
Hall (WTH) garden since December and an online questionnaire in the council’s consultation hub
was open for comment between 22 November 2018 and 21 January 2019.

There were 120 responses to the online consultation and a summary of the results is noted below.
There was support for both proposals but most of the 120 respondents noted that General Projects
had a very or fairly good mix of uses, that they respected and enhanced the heritage and that they
allowed very or fairly good public access and engagement. Supporters felt that General Projects
offered a vibrant community focused centre with diverse employment that would be an incredible
asset for Walworth.

There were significant consultation responses stating concerns about the proposals; that they had a
poor mix of uses, that neither proposal respected or enhanced the heritage and that there were
poor levels of public access and engagement. A number of those responses did not give specific
reasons why they selected ‘poor’ and the many of the responses against the proposals included the
same text outlining their concerns or were very similar.

These included; disappointment in the community involvement in the marketing process, that the
bids did not match the aim of a publically accessible cultural hub or destination, that the council
should redevelop the buildings and keep them in council ownership, the lost provision of Library
and Heritage/Cuming collection, and the length of the lease which was initially suggested by council
as being 250 years, was too long. It was suggested that Council should be able to redevelop the
complex for £20m around commercial uses and cultural uses including a heritage hub.

As part of the consultation response, the Walworth Society submitted an alternative use from the
proposals for the former library as a Southwark Heritage Centre to be managed and operated by a
trust. Across approximately 900m² of the building they proposed an area to display and celebrate
the heritage of Southwark, a space for community cultural events a community meeting room and
storage. They also included bringing the Council’s archive service to operate within the heritage
hub.

Main concerns raised from the consultation
1. That a replacement library and Cuming Museum are not included
2. Lease length of 250 years is too long
3. Council should maintain ownership and develop a community and commercial facility
4. Level of community access and covenants to protect access
5. What does publically accessible mean i.e. restaurants are not publically accessible as you
   need to make a purchase to be there
6. Not meeting the new Southwark Plan commitment for a cultural hub

Summary of the comments received and proposal support
Question 1: To what extent do you think these proposals bring a good mix of uses to Walworth?

Mix of uses - General Projects

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Option</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Very good mix of uses</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>24.37%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fairly good mix of uses</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>16.81%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not sure</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5.04%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor mix of uses</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>36.13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Answered</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>17.65%</td>
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</table>

Mix of uses - Castleforge

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Option</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Very good mix of uses</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>10.92%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fairly good mix of uses</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>15.13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not sure</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>11.76%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor mix of uses</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>43.70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Answered</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>18.49%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Please give reasons for your answers, and explain how these uses would benefit the community

There were 82 responses to this part of the question.

Question 2: Which of the proposed uses do you think you would visit the complex for?

Which would you visit for

There were 87 responses to this part of the question.
Question 3: To what extent do you think these proposals respect and enhance the heritage of the listed building?

**respect the heritage - General Projects**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Option</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Very much respects and enhances the heritage</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>19.33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fairly well respects and enhances the heritage</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>26.05%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not sure</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5.88%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poorly respects and doesn't enhance the heritage.</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>30.25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Answered</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>18.49%</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**respect the heritage - Castleforge**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Option</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Very much respects and enhances the heritage</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>10.08%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fairly well respects and enhances the heritage</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>17.65%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not sure</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>15.97%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poorly respects and doesn't enhance the heritage.</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>36.97%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Answered</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>19.33%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Please give reasons for your answers**

There were 72 responses to this part of the question.
Question 4: To what extent do you think these proposals allow good public access and engagement with the building?

**access and engagement - General Projects**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Option</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Allows very good public access and engagement</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>23.53%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Allows fairly good public access and engagement</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>16.81%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not sure</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5.88%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Allows only poor public access and engagement</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>36.13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Answered</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>17.65%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**access and engagement - Castleforge**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Allows very good public access and engagement</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>10.08%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Allows fairly good public access and engagement</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>15.13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not sure</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>9.24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Allows only poor public access and engagement</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>47.06%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Answered</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>18.49%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Please give reasons for your answers**

There were 66 responses to this part of the question.

**Question 5: Please tell us anything else you would like to about these proposals.**

**anything else**

There were 95 responses to this part of the question.
1. That a replacement library and Cuming Museum are not included

Paragraph 11
Subsequent to the June 2017 design the council has also resolved to deliver the services that were previously part of its plan for WTH in new ways. In particular cabinet agreed to take a lease of new premises for a new Walworth Library and Southwark Heritage Centre on Walworth Road at its meeting on 22 January 2019. This initiative will provide a heritage centre for all of Southwark showcasing the history of the borough and drawing people from all over Southwark and beyond to a great new resource. It will also re-provide the library services from the former Newington Library and include collections from the Town Hall into an integrated facility that allows for efficiencies in management and creates opportunities for maximising the visitor experience across ways of learning.

In addition

*General Projects are interested in the loan and display of elements from the collections within the redeveloped Walworth Town Hall and ensuring free public access to such displays.*

2. Lease length of 250 years is too long

Paragraph 47
Assuming the preferred bidder carries out the works required in the agreement for lease it will be granted a lease on the following principal terms:

i. A duration of 150 years

Paragraph 48
Set out below is commentary on the proposed principal lease terms:

i. The Lease was initially to be 250 years but following community feedback both bidders agreed to accept a lesser duration. Cabinet needs to bear in mind that to implement the refurbishment any bidder will be making a substantial capital investment and in order to gain funding and justify the investment and risk a long lease is necessary. By comparison, the lease to be granted to the council for the new library for Walworth will be 250 years.

3. Council should maintain ownership and develop a community and commercial facility

Paragraph 62
Other than the councils £2m contribution the financing of the projects costs is from General Projects. As a consequence General Projects are taking on all the construction and delivery risk from the council. General Projects have stated that their estimate of project costs is lower than the £35m council project. It should be noted that the General Projects scheme design is at early RIBA stage 1 concept design. Therefore substantial detailed design, utilities infrastructure and construction methodology work needs to be carried out to reach cost certainty and gain greater understanding of the project risks which are significant with a building of this type and history. Through the assessment process it is determined that General Projects have sufficient resources in place to manage risk should budgets increase and the skills evidenced in other projects reflect the experience necessary to identify and manage project risks.
Paragraph 63
The Council has invested £5m in the Walworth Town Hall during the emergency works, making the building safe, secure and weather tight and reinstating the historically significant Vestry Hall roof along Walworth Road. This work has prevented the buildings further deterioration and aided subsequent investment to bring the buildings back into active use.

Paragraph 64
The council scheme costed at £35m had completed RIBA stage 2 and therefore the cost estimate was based on a greater level of design and construction certainty. This scheme differed significantly from that proposed by General Projects as it included a number of public services that required specific operational functionality, internal circulation and utility solutions. As a consequence comparison of General Project and council scheme costs are not a useful guide to final project costs. The Council project at RIBA stage 2 included a substantial contingency within the £35m budget to manage on-going construction risk. In addition there was a significant fee allocation to meet the costs of external project management and specialist consultancy advice as these are not available within the council. General Projects will be responsible for such costs and they will be in addition to any capital investment they are making.

4. Level of community access and covenants to protect access
Recommendation 6
That officers prepare a further report for cabinet on the dedicated community/arts/culture space in the ground floor of the former Newington Library. Which will address:

a. a vision for the community, arts and culture space which meets the needs of the diverse Southwark population to be developed in consultation with stakeholders, community and General Projects

b. options for an operational model which can deliver on the council’s commitment for community involvement in the management of the space.

Paragraph 37
General Projects’ offer includes approximately 380m2 of unhindered publically accessible space, approximately 200m2 of café and restaurant space accessible to the public with additional rooms throughout the buildings of semi accessible public space i.e. through programmed events and activities. Access is broadly defined as during normal business hours. This is comparable with the pre fire publically accessible library heritage display and programmed education space of approximately 650m2.

Paragraph 38
In addition the council has also recently approved the leasing of ground floor space for a new 559m2 library and Southwark heritage centre on the Walworth Road. This will help meet the need for local community library facilities and will promote Southwark’s heritage through exhibition and education opportunities. The new library delivers an additional undertaking within the Council Plan.

Paragraph 47
xi. The lessee to provide a minimum of 240m2 of community space (the Society Room) provided on the ground floor of the former Newington Library
Paragraph 48
xi. This provision is helping to meet the community aspiration and council requirement for genuinely public accessible space for community, arts and culture within the buildings.

NB The area and rooms that have been publically accessible have changed over the life of the building but the majority of WTH space has been offices and council meeting room with limited access.

5. Restaurants and cafes are not publically accessible
Paragraph 37
General Projects’ offer includes approximately 380m² of unhindered publically accessible space, approximately 200m² of café and restaurant space accessible to the public with additional rooms throughout the buildings of semi accessible public space i.e. through programmed events and activities. Access is broadly defined as during normal business hours. This is comparable with the pre fire publically accessible library heritage display and programmed education space of approximately 650m².

6. Not meeting the Southwark Plan commitment for a cultural hub
Paragraph 35
It is assessed that General Projects’ bid is more closely aligned with the aspirations of council for the building and Walworth’s local economy. General Projects focus on supporting the creative industries through a range of co-working, maker and studio or workshop spaces complements existing institutions and provision locally while cultivating a unique and dynamic enterprise, employment and cultural hub on the Walworth Road. The support from and ongoing discussions with the Art Academy is encouraging and the proposal creates enterprise opportunities for both the local community and from further afield.

Paragraph 36
General Projects has proposed to meet the need for genuine community access by covenanted to provide a space solely for such a purpose in the former adults and children’s libraries. There is also genuine public access into the central hub and atrium which links the building together and includes a café. The community offer extends to opportunities for programmed events and activities and public hire of spaces in evenings and weekends. Finally, the proposal looks to open onto the new Walworth Square providing a strong connection to the public realm with the potential to foster exchange between events and activities taking place in the square and other adjacent premises.

Paragraph 44
In considering approval of submission of the intended planning application the Director of Regeneration will wish to be satisfied that it broadly complies with the concept described in paragraph 32 and spatial requirements noted in paragraph 37. General Projects have proposed to covenant with the council to make the Adults and Children’s library of the former Newington Library space available at no cost for a programme of community, arts and cultural activities. This commitment is one of the strengths of the proposal and as a next step a management and operational plan will need to be developed to agree the most appropriate mechanism for ensuring the space is well used with a programme of curated
events. Council will set minimum hours per week and weeks per year for the community space to be made available. Officers will bring a further report to Cabinet setting out proposals to ensure this is secured.